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COMMONWEAL

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CORRESPONDENCE

Try the 'Tootsie' role

Midland, Md.

To the Editors: Besides thanking Bishop Francis Murphy for his courageous and profound critique of the proposed pastoral on women's concerns [September 25], I would like to add one suggestion to his list. With due respect, those prelates who fail to recognize the areas of injustice to women in the church might well follow the example of Dustin Hoffman and try living the role of "Tootsie" for a week. The experience might throw a surprising light on things. MARIETTA CULHANE, O.S.F.

St. Paul the consultant

Bronx, N.Y.

To the Editors: The most chilling sentence I've read in a long time occurred in Bishop Murphy's piece, in the Vatican's response to the Imesch committee: "They asserted that bishops are teachers, not learners; truth cannot emerge through consultation." Surely, Acts and Galatians have been published in Rome by now, in which the first pope and the first bishop of Jerusalem learned from Paul that one needn't become a Jew in order to become a Christian—which, till then, they had thought an unchangeable tenet of the faith. Authority hasn't negated Scripture yet. Has it?

WILLIAM J. O'MALLEY, S.J.

A defining moment

Laurel, Md.

To the Editors: Two reasons to send congratulations for the issue of September 25: your own fine editorial and Bishop Murphy's courageous, insightful, and creative article on the pastoral on women's concerns. One thing strikes me very strongly: This pastoral is a defining moment, not only in setting straight where the "concern" should truly lie (not with women but with a church that has excluded and continues to exclude women from its life and mission) but also in deciding whether the U.S. church in the person of its hierarchy will be faithful to the Spirit working within its own faith community or will continue to make concessions to appease Rome.

I think of how impoverished the whole church would be if liberation theology emanating from the lived experience of the people of Latin America had been squelched by Rome. Are we not in similar circumstances with the cry for liberation rising strongly from women in the U.S. church (though certainly not exclusively here)? It is the church universal—along with the regional U.S. church—that will be enhanced if Bishop Murphy's sound advice is followed. Thanks to him and to you for gifting us with this breath of life!

JANE BLEWETT

The price of candor

Calumet City, Ill.

To the Editors: In the '60s, when I was asking priests to add their signatures on a newspaper ad that called for ending the bombing of Hanoi, two auxiliary bishops who agreed with the thrust of the ad declined to sign because their archbishop had not spoken on the subject. Auxiliary Bishop Murphy's archbishop, a significant person in the bishops' conference, had not spoken on the women's issue. This did not stop Murphy from speaking for himself. It is a message to auxiliaries who affirm the ordination of women but are unwilling to put their careers on the line. The bishops in Juneau, Saginaw, and New Ulm have cut themselves off from moving up by speaking out. When bishops are willing to pay the price for breaking ranks, the façade of a unified hierarchy against the ordination of women will fall apart. DENNIS GEANEY, O.S.A.

A spark of hope

Wakefield, R.I.

To the Editors: Thanks be to Bishop P. Francis Murphy for writing "Let's Start Over: A Bishop Appraises the Pastoral on Women" [September 25], and to *Commonweal* for publishing it! This is the first honest essay by a bishop on the subject of women and the church that I have ever read. Now there's a spark of hope in the patriarchal darkness!

In the same issue, Peter D. Walzer's letter ("A Way Out") proposing a third way for disaffected Catholics also surprised and delighted me. In the'70s, I found I could not function in a male-dominated institution, and for several years attended Episcopal, then Unitarian churches. Now, happily a Quaker, specifically one of the Quaker Universalist Fellowship, I am committed to a spiritual journey that is unmediated, intelligent, and free. God, so far, has not struck me down with thunderbolts, but has opened my existence to tolerance and joy.

I have a subscription to *Commonweal* (my reading is eclectic) to keep my finger on the pulse of the dying institution, and to listen for other voices in the darkness. CATHERINE HULL

Garvey's choice

Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio

To the Editors: In the forty-three years that I have been reading *Commonweal*, I have rarely, if ever, seen a more irresponsible piece than John Garvey's recent effort [September 25].

(Continued on page 29)

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COMMONWEAL

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Yes, the vision thing

Turning points in the affairs of nations often emerge only after historians fix the time lines of their research. But sometimes such turning points are dramatically evident. No one needed a history book to recognize that 1918 and 1945 ushered in dramatically different periods from the ones preceding. We have now lived through the era that began in 1945 with the defeat of Germany and Japan and the outbreak of the cold war. Our enemies quickly became our political allies, and eventually our chief economic competitors. The Soviet Union, our wartime ally, seized upon the victory over Germany to extend its empire into Western Europe. For over forty years, our foreign and military policies were organized around these postwar shifts. And to varying degrees our economy, our politics, and our culture were shaped by the commitment to contain the Soviet Union, with all of the fiscal and moral capital that goal required.

The dismantling of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the Communist governments in Russia and throughout Eastern Europe have occurred over several years, and the outcome is still not clear. Yet who can doubt that once again the world, certainly the North Atlantic portion, is in the train of another turning point.

But where is the comprehensive strategy to guide our foreign and military policy of the sort George Kennan provided in his now classic essay in *Foreign Affairs* on containment? Or who has enunciated a domestic strategy on the order of Harry Truman's "Fair Deal," a pledge to extend postwar prosperity to all Americans?

In 1992 the economic and political situation of the United States is changed, in part because the doctrine of containment and the Fair Deal were accurate maps diligently followed. Today we require new maps.

While this turning point in history is not coincident with the presidential campaign now drawing to a close, the absence of ideas by which to shape our future foreign and domestic policies is more than disappointing, it is deeply disquieting. The candidates have jousted for tactical advantage within narrowly framed differences, yet the winner, and the rest of us, will find the choices of the next four years, and their ramifications, swelling far beyond these constricted debates.

We know for sure that the U.S. dominance in world affairs will be steadily trimmed and our history of sustained abundance will encounter strict environmental and economic limits. Will the winner on November 3 be ready to cope with those limits and yet press against some daunting domestic and foreign problems?

Above all, will the winner have the vision to imagine and inspire the American people to reckon with the risks of interdependence among ourselves and with other peoples? We fancy ourselves a nation of individualists while we live in a world growing ever smaller and ever closer. This dangerous delusion must give way to a renewed understanding of the common good and a sustained commitment to communality, the ability of each of us to anticipate the needs of others and the

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willingness to meet them in a cohesive and coherent way. Our loss of common purpose is closely tied to the great taboo of this year's electoral politics—taxes, which perfectly symbolizes our challenge and our dilemma.

"Taxes are what we pay for civilized society." So wrote Oliver Wendell Holmes. Yet as long as most Americans do not see this society as their community, their fellow citizens as their neighbors, or this world as their responsibility, taxes are scorned and likened to highway robbery. And as long as political leaders appeal to special interests and pander to what divides us, citizens will keep their resources from the common pot. This vicious cycle of antipolitics, antigovernment, antitaxes, must end. For without resources in the public coffers we cannot (and do not currently) help pay for international peace-keeping efforts, cannot help support the struggles for democracy in Eastern Europe or South Africa, cannot help ensure the dignity and survival of millions of starving East Africans. Here at home the steady erosion of human dignity that follows upon homelessness, unemployment, school failure, and poverty as well as the corrosion of our material infrastructure, inner cities, schools, roads, and bridges follows upon a decade of private profligacy and public penury.

Programs and policies that address these can only follow from leadership prepared to help Americans understand our limits—economic, environmental, social, and personal—and ready to inspire that subtle mix of belt tightening and generosity of spirit required in a society justly ordered to the common good.

Yes, the vision thing. Turning points require them.

AN EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

THE ULTIMATE ORDEAL

SEE ALSO, FRANK McCONNELL, PAGE 18

Frank McConnell writes in this issue about the joys, hopes, griefs, and anxieties experienced by any person in the modern world who tries to do live comedy. This induces me to recycle a story I've told before, but not in this space.

The unlikely fact is that I once performed, for pay, as a stand-up comic. For about an hour. Well, no, for maybe a minute, during which I experienced a degree of anxiety unmatched anywhere except, I guess, in childbirth. There was a stool handy; I sat down. I learned, instantly, that sit-down comics also suffer.

I had been booked as a speaker at a meeting of religious journalists—and, later, to help create amusement at a St. Louis coffeehouse run by Protestant clergymen who, in their zeal to recapture Alienated Youth, provided nightly entertainment along with the coffee. I was billed to engage in profound but witty dialogue on Christian sarcasm, or something like that, with an editor named Stephen Rose. Since he was known to me as witty but profound, I had cast myself as appreciative straight man.

But Rose—get this—didn't show. The M.C. turned on the spotlight, introduced me, handed me the mike, and walked away. I observed that every person in the place had at least two large, staring eyes. The men looked like hostile sphinxes, the women like hostile lady sphinxes. Over the years, as it happened, I had become aware of what happens when I tell a joke off the cuff. Nothing. Or, sometimes, puzzlement might rise. You talk about *anxious!*

I was rescued, in *absentia*, by my longtime secretary at the *National Catholic Reporter*, Betty Fitzpatrick. In my jacket pocket, thanks to her foresight and diligence, was an envelope containing a year's file of a column called "Cry Pax!" (subtitled "A Column without Rules") which ran in every issue of *NCR* in its early years, consisting of various kinds of funnies contributed by our readers and staff. I stumbled through a preface and read an item from one of the columns—maybe this one, which reported the wording of a sign on the wall of a Baltimore estate: "*Trespassers will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. Sisters of Mercy.*"

There were titters out there. I tried another. Giggles. Wow. A few more, and I was interrupted by applause. There is no sound quite like that except perhaps the majestic-yet-swinging chorus of praise rendered by the nine choirs of angels, which I have not yet been in a position to savor.

More samples? Sure. From a Montreal Catholic publication called *Challenge* we borrowed a monsignor's explanation of the slight tonal difference in the shades of purple in monsignors' robes and those worn by bishops. The dye for the monsignorial purple, he said, was pressed from sour grapes. A separate item disclosed Father Bernard Häring's proposed canonical rule: Monsignors should be permitted to wear their purple robes, but not in holy places.

Not everything in the column was churchy. Noting a *Los Angeles Times* headline—B-52 CRASHES OFF GREENLAND WITH H-BOMBS: DANES IRKED—Cry Pax! remarked: "A sensitive, melancholy people, the Danes." And from the Kansas City *Star*: KIDNEY RECIPIENT/TO LEAVE BED/SEVERAL TIMES.

Mangled figures of speech provided grist. A quote from a *Commonweal* [!] piece by Harvey Cox—"Tomorrow, so the argument runs, universities will provide the cog around which the rest of the society's spokes will rotate"—drew this response: "Let's roll that metaphor down the road and see if it meshes." No comment was necessary on the lead sentence in a *Michigan Catholic* story about a meeting that was to present the Catholic view on abortion. The story began: "In an effort to erase misconceptions...."

A parish bulletin in *NCR*'s home town, Kansas City, Missouri, urged Mass-goers to "pick up your copy of *Our Sunday Visitor*, the Official Catholic Weekly Newspaper, as you leave the Church." "You've got it all wrong," said Pax! "It's the *unofficial* ones you read as you leave the church." But when the first action of a newly organized parish council in Jessie, North Dakota, was to cancel a bulk order for *NCR*, the column hinted that maybe the increase in lay responsi-

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bility was getting out of hand.

I don't remember how I ended my coffeehouse gig. It's likely I had something stronger than coffee. Judging from the context of Frank McConnell's column, he's done stand-up more than once. Not I. Never again, not for the holiest of good causes. Doing penance is good. Masochism is *evil*.

Later, *NCR* published a book drawn from the column. Its final item: "The U.S. Government Printing Office offers a pamphlet called *Writing Guide for Naval Officers* which 'presents suggestions on how to start, expedite, and stop writing.' That last part is easy. In order to stop writing, you just "

ROBERT G. HOYT

REPORT ON FREE TRADE

WILL JOBS GO SOUTH?
ALONG WITH SAFETY & HEALTH

Until recently, almost no one paid attention to a secret treaty that was being negotiated between the United States, Canada, and Mexico. Now the story is out and it is clear that the treaty, called the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), threatens the jobs of hundreds of thousands of American workers while at the same time it grants unelected government bureaucrats of the three countries the right to override any federal or state law they deem incompatible with the treaty.

NAFTA is a 1,078-page document designed to integrate the economies of the U.S., Canada, and Mexico and to permit free trading across borders. Proponents herald it as the beginning of an economic renaissance that will lead to an enormous growth in employment in this country. By increasing exports to the people of Mexico and ultimately all of Latin America, they argue, and thus by raising their standard of living, millions of them will rush out to buy so many American-made goods that the dream of full employment here will become a reality. What NAFTA's supporters fail to mention, however, is the flow of imports that will surely invade this country's markets. Nor can they explain how the movement of American industry to a country where workers now earn an average of $.59 an hour in American-owned assembly plants will lead to an American workers' paradise.

NAFTA has recently been presented to Congress on a take-it-or-leave-it basis; when Congress takes it up early next year, it will then have sixty working days to say yes or no, with no right to amend the agreement in any way—unless a new president decides to demand changes.

Why the hurry? And why all the mystery during the lengthy negotiations to hammer out this treaty?

Essentially because it is a multinational's let's-tame-the-unions-and-environmentalists dream pact. After approval by the three nations, these vast international firms, whose influence, wealth, and power dwarf those of many sovereign states, will be able to minimize their costs and maximize their profits while transferring money and technology as they move from country to country in search of lower taxes and dirt-cheap labor, impotent unions, and cooperative third-world elites and politicians.

In New York state, as the State Senate Democratic Task Force revealed in August, more than 1 million factory jobs have been lost for a variety of reasons since 1970. In 1990 alone, 300,000 jobs vanished, 115,000 of them in manufacturing. The New York State AFL-CIO argues that should NAFTA be ratified as it now stands many more jobs will be lost in the retail, finance, insurance, real estate, and construction industries, and that subsequent losses of tax revenues will also lead to layoffs in both the public and private sectors.

Not so, argue NAFTA's proponents, reiterating mantras of "competition" and "free trade" and insisting that loss of American jobs will only be temporary (though NAFTA does not include any funds or programs for job retraining).

The reality is quite different. Canada signed its free-trade agreement with the United States in 1989. According to Statistics Canada, the country has since lost more than 460,000 higher-paying jobs to lower-paying United States and Mexican-based corporations, nearly 25 percent of its manufacturing employees. "To find a greater collapse of manufacturing employment one has to go back to the Great Depression," concluded the Ottawa-based Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. "This adds up to a human crisis which rivals the 1930s."

Or take Danville, Illinois, where the electrical manufacturer which once employed 1,000 people is departing for Mexico. As is happening in many Midwestern small cities, once the factories leave so do the young. Retail stores are abandoned and public services are reduced sharply. "Something's wrong," a member of the Danville's Board of Supervisors who is witnessing the decay of his once-prosperous community told a television interviewer not long ago.

The same thing may well happen to a Mexican city like Juarez, now awash in Yankee and Canadian corporate dollars, when their workers decide to demand strong unions, wage and fringe benefits, and environmental safeguards. When that happens, and it will, expect the multinationals to pack up and look for yet another impoverished nation with a large supply of people desperate enough to work for very little. Already there are plans to include all Latin American and Caribbean countries except Cuba in the agreement.

Then, too, dangerous pesticides that are banned or curtailed for use in the United States are shipped to Mexico and used on the fruits and vegetables we import; safety standards are only minimally observed; many towns that have received American manufacturing plants are being damaged by unregulated toxic wastes. Indeed, the American Medical Society referred to these Mexican border towns where American-owned factories are situated as a "2000-mile-long Love Canal."

This is not to say that the concept of a global economy is a mistake; clearly, trade wars and protective tariffs are the basic

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ingredients of turmoil at home and conflict between nations. Even so, this country's elected representatives and the American people will have to choose the course they wish to take, for themselves and for their children: Can productivity and prosperity be revitalized here at home by closing factory gates and transferring investments to poor and exploited countries? Or shall we follow the example of Germany and Japan by investing in new plants, the education of a highly skilled labor force, and an infrastructure sorely in need of rebuilding?

Since 1977 some 2,000 American firms have moved their operations to Mexico where the typical pay is $30 for a forty-eight-hour week, often with few or no fringe benefits or enforced safety standards. Others have fled to El Salvador and Honduras after closing down or cutting back their American-based operations. The resulting diminution of the industrial base in the United States has been enormous: in Germany, for example, 32 percent of the labor force is engaged in manufacturing; in Japan, 28 percent; but here only 16 percent.

What is required is a renegotiation of NAFTA so that displaced American workers will be compensated with money and guaranteed health-care benefits; that the same federal incentives granted businesses fleeing to Mexico be given businesses that choose to stay to allow them to expand and hire; and that there be strict maintenance of environmental standards in Mexico, subject to a special investigative body with the power to punish malefactors with trade sanctions.

NAFTA, as Congressmen Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) and Richard Gephardt (D-Mo.) insisted following the introduction of their bill to amend the treaty, "would clearly undercut U.S. health, safety, and environmental laws."

But even more: Its enactment will not only seriously erode the living standards of millions of Americans and their children but also plant the seeds of social and political dynamite among Americans who may come to believe they have been abandoned and betrayed. As it now stands, NAFTA is a clear and present danger to millions of Americans and their families.

MURRAY POLNER

Murray Polner writes frequently on economic and political affairs.

REPORT FROM A BULL SESSION

CONTRADICTION IN TERMS?

'REALLY CATHOLIC, YET ELECTABLE'

Out of the chaos of an election-year bull session, there emerged a challenge put to me—known to my students, I should add, both as a Catholic chaplain at Tufts University and as a current events buff with a special addiction to political news. The discussion started with the abortion issue (on which they were divided). But then it ranged further. The students generally agreed that all the "mega-Catholics" in politics—Kennedy, Cuomo, Foley, and Moynihan—are effectively prochoice. Then one student pointed out that some Catholic politicians who position themselves as prolife depart from Catholic social teachings on capital punishment, the rights of labor, treatment of refugees, aid to the poor. A consensus emerged: There are no prominent political leaders who consistently embody the values of the church's social teaching. Moreover, it was agreed, anyone who did subscribe to those teachings would be unelectable, whether in the United States or anywhere else.

Right, Father?

Bravely, I take my stand: Not so. "Off the top, I can think of two very significant world political leaders and three popular American politicians—including two right here in Massachusetts—who not only stand up for the whole range of Catholic social teaching but are upfront about it—and who consistently get elected and reelected."

Skepticism showed its eyebrows, so I quickly showed my cards. To their credit, the students were familiar with the two European leaders I named, but did not know that both are active Catholics strongly influenced by the church's social ethics. And yet, I reported, every knowledgeable commentator about Jacques Delors says that Catholic ideas and principles deeply inform his thinking and his leadership role in the European community. His writings and speeches point to the common good as the focal point for the new, communitarian Europe he hopes to build. Respectful of national and cultural differences, he nevertheless eschews nationalism and pushes toward a common identity for Europe. Against fears of dominance by a European supergovernment, he poses the principle of subsidiarity: problems are to be resolved at the lowest level that can accommodate them. Such a vision is not only compatible with the modern papal encyclicals but, in Delors's case, is drawn from them —though, with ecumenical nuance, he points to the importance given to subsidiarity in Calvinist traditions as well as in his own Catholic roots. It is telling, perhaps, that Margaret Thatcher was his most persistent critic; she shrewdly recognized that his philosophy is profoundly at odds with the ideology of rampant individualism and narrow nationalism that bears her name.

The European leader who most accurately read the signs of the disintegration of the Soviet empire and who moved most decisively to open up freedom there and in all of Eastern Europe is now the chancellor of a united Germany, Helmut Kohl. Though U.S. commentators may know the Catholic origins of Kohl's party, the Christian Democrats, they generally fail to acknowledge, as Europeans do, the seriousness of his commitment to Catholic social and political principles, concretely shown in his bold but carefully constructed overtures of support for Gorbachev's liberalization, his swift move to integrate the two Germanys after the collapse of the Berlin Wall, his decisive steps to resolve border disputes with Poland, Germany's leadership in recognizing the new republics of a disintegrating Yugoslavia, and Kohl's strong support for European unification. Eventually, it is true, Kohl may pay a price at the polling places for the sacrifices his programs have

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asked of the Germans, but much of what he has helped the country to achieve is solidly founded and probably irreversible.

With this, the skepticism of my students may have lifted a little, but I needed examples less remote from the students' lives. There was one close at hand: Tufts is located in Medford, which abuts Boston, where Mayor Raymond Flynn recently won reelection in one of the most massive electoral triumphs in American history. Flynn is respected by his peers—he serves as president of the United States Conference of Mayors—and is so popular with voters that he was mentioned as a vice-presidential candidate, only to be routinely dismissed in the media because he is forthrightly prolife on abortion—a stance that has become an absolute no-no for the Democrats. One of the most persistent critics of the Bush administration, Flynn holds positions on poverty, immigration, welfare reform, health care, and housing that are precise political expressions of Catholic social teaching as applied to the American condition by the U.S. Catholic bishops (*see,* "Operation 'Domestic Order,'" Raymond L. Flynn, *Commonweal*, April 19, 1991).

Flynn's popularity is not the only evidence challenging the conventional wisdom of Massachusetts pundits, who hold that the state is so solidly prochoice that anyone not committed to abortion on demand is unelectable. True, even the very conservative Republican governor is vigorously prochoice. But, until the recent death and replacement of Congressman Silvio Conte, six of the eleven Massachusetts members of the House of Representatives had solid prolife voting records, according to evaluations by Justlife, a political action group which assesses political figures on the basis of the "consistent ethic of life," including arms reduction, poverty, refugee and immigration programs, and opposition to the death penalty, as well as abortion. An outstanding example is Congressman Joseph Moakley, who represents portions of Boston and its suburbs. Besides meeting the Justlife criteria, Moakley has an unusually strong record on human rights; he opposed U.S. intervention in Central America and was almost singlehandedly responsible for assembling and publicizing the massive documentation that drew back the dark curtain surrounding the murders of the Salvadoran Jesuits and their associates.

It happens that the particular college students in this discussion are well informed people who read the papers and watch the TV news. The political figures on my list are people they recognize. But the students were captured by a myth, a widespread and pervasive misunderstanding that colors much media coverage and commentary: the belief that Catholics who enter politics must, if they hope to be elected to office, either privatize their moral convictions on abortion or else embrace a full right-wing agenda along with opposition to abortion.

It isn't true. That's part of what Pennsylvania's Governor Robert Casey has tried in vain to convey to the leaders of the Democratic party. Casey himself has eloquently articulated a consistent ethic of life drawn from modern Catholic social teachings. He argues that the American tradition (and, he contends, his party's tradition) calls for the inclusion of more groups under constitutional and statutory protection, from the naturalization of immigrants to the reform of labor laws to the civil rights laws to equality for women. It is out of that tradition that he argues for extending constitutional protection to unborn children.

As I told the students, I would hardly contend that espousal of Catholic social teachings will guarantee a candidate's electoral success (though Governor Casey might argue that such a platform, advanced on its merits rather than in a sectarian fashion, would put the candidate in closer touch with many elements of the American electorate). For myself, it's clear that candidates and officeholders can find a coherent wisdom in Catholic teachings about the purposes and principles of governance, and that absorbing and projecting that wisdom doesn't mean you're unelectable. MICHAEL J. HUNT

Michael J. Hunt, a Paulist priest, is the Catholic chaplain at Tufts University. He is the author of the forthcoming College Catholics *(Paulist Press).*

OF SEVERAL MINDS John Garvey

COMMUNITY IS NOT AN AGGREGATE

CULTURE WAR AT THE SCHOOL BOARD

The debate over family values is, of course, not a debate at all. People invoke the word to mean something vague—wholesome versus self-indulgence, tradition versus change, a distrust of modernity (and, I suppose, postmodernity). The use of the idea by politicians, as if the things that most threaten us could be solved politically, is as empty as most political rhetoric. But occasionally something political happens that reveals a genuine question of values, and shows that some of what gets pulled into the debate over traditional family values does in fact matter deeply.

In May, the New York City Board of Education's vice-president, Irene Impellizzeri, addressed a Catholic organization. Some of what she had to say about sex education, family values, and the children growing up in New York's poor neighborhoods caused a fierce reaction: sixteen City Council members demanded that she be removed, and Brooklyn's Borough President Howard Golden criticized the speech.

On June 23 *New York Newsday* reprinted some of the most controversial excerpts. I'd like to quote a few, because Impellizzeri's speech and the reaction to it strike me as much more revealing than the empty rhetoric at the Republican

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National Convention, and the empty reaction to it.

Impellizzeri is critical of "nonethnic, nonracial minorities—self-defined minorities—such as the underclass" who have agendas that have nothing to do with emergence into the surrounding culture. She borrows a distinction, originally made by Disraeli, between a community and an aggregation. "In the city where we work, there is little or no community any more. There is aggregation—the forming of groups. And the difference is profound. Communities have consciences. Aggregations have programs. Communities work by civility. Aggregations get their way by stridency....The fundamental difference between a community and an aggregation is really the difference between what is in one's interest and what one desires.

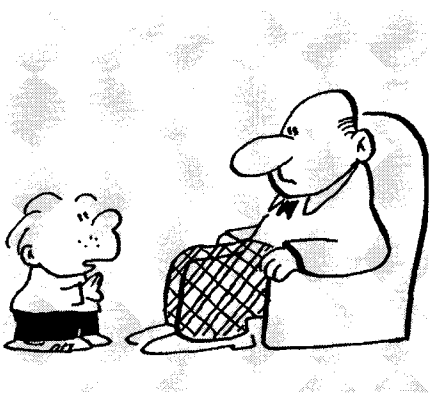
"A community shares a hope; hope is an activity of the spirit. An aggregation simply wants, with brutal urgency. The human mind is so complicated that intelligence and other gifts of the spirit can actually regulate desire—or it can be prostituted to desire.

"A nonjudgmental culture—an indifferentist culture....puts desire ahead of interest, because desire can be so readily expressed; it has that beet-red infantile immediacy. In such a culture, hope is replaced by the arithmetical sum of appetites.

"Those appetites have made their way into much of our lives in this city. They are a large factor in explaining the recent turbulent changes in the school system....

"The saddest immaturity...is to accept appetite as a rule of life. The most debilitating weakness is to be unable to defer gratification. The most grievous failure in life is the lack of self-discipline....Self-discipline is not an instinct; it is learned from adults, sometimes subconsciously, sometimes painfully. Even when learned in childhood, it often falters in adolescence, when desire takes on new forms and an anarchic intensity, and then the young brain is awash with hormones and with the erotic imagery of popular culture. The adult who tells an adolescent 'You have the right to obey your impulses' is guilty of treachery to the adolescent as well as to the community....That may not seem so pressing to the rich, who have a long way to slide, though not as long a way as they may think. But if the children of the poor are taught that they need not be constrained by the social order and its civilities and its prudential demands; that they have the right—unearned—to set their own standards, or no standards at all; that they are mysteriously able to 'think for themselves': without in fact learning to think—as distinct from feel or want—they will never, never escape from poverty."

What Impellizzeri said has to be seen against the background of a school system that distributes condoms to students, but was furious when members of the school board voted in favor of a policy



"Can you tell me the facts of life, Dad, without imposing your moral standards, that is?"

which said that, in addition to being taught about condoms and safe sex, students must be told that refraining from sex is by far the safest way to avoid AIDS, and that this instruction must be a prominent part of the mandated instruction. The same system was outraged when some school boards voted not to include the books *Heather Has Two Mommies* and *Daddy's Roommate* in the curriculum; the books were designed to present homosexual couples as equivalent to the traditional family.

Impellizzeri's was an angry speech, but she is onto something important. We are, in fact, being asked to accept the idea that chastity is impossible for teen-agers, and indeed for anyone; or, if possible, it is a kind of repression. We are being asked to accept all "lifestyles" as equally valid, equally worthy of support and praise. Not only that: to question any of this is to risk—or rather to ensure—being called homophobic or intolerant or racist or repressive. People like Impellizzeri are accused of wanting to repress all gays, of not caring about those who suffer from AIDS, of not respecting minority cultures, etc. And no doubt some people who agree enthusiastically with Impellizzeri are intolerant, and wouldn't mind a bit of suppression.

But something much deeper is at stake here. The idea that a home centered in a man and a woman who live together in love, and love for their children, is more desirable than other alternatives is based on a long experience of family, and the deepest needs of children. There are of course perfectly horrible homes based on heterosexual marriages, and some "nontraditional" homes in which there is a lot of love. This does not mean, however, that we should not have any ideal at all, or allow any alternative to be seen as equally valuable. Should intolerance force us to accept patriarchal polygamy, or homes in which sadism and masochism are the rule, or incestuous marriages? Some might not see a problem with any of these, as long as all the adults involved gave their free consent. But if secularism reaches a point where one may not advance any understanding as superior to any other, we have to fight it. People like Irene Impellizzeri are being asked to see their own values as mere "lifestyle options," inferior to the desire-based indifferentist culture she criticizes. At home you may tell your teen-ager that chastity is right, or abortion is wrong; but he or she will not even hear chastity mentioned in school, and abortion may not be criticized as wrong, but must be mentioned as an option. This is not even relativism; it is the final triumph of extreme secularism over any traditional understanding.

Toward the end of her speech Impellizzeri said, "There seems to be an extraordinary celebration going on around us, a celebration of the momentary, of the barren, of the terminal, of the involuntary, of the gross—a death-culture, in fact." I'm afraid she's right, and the kind of outrage her speech provoked almost proves her point. □

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LOOSE PLANKS IN PARTY PLATFORMS

HISTORY CASTS SOME LIGHT

ISHMAEL LAW

Rare as it is that a political platform sparks any news, this summer both major parties had to stifle challenges to the abortion-related planks in their platforms. Yet why should anybody but an ideologue be disturbed by a platform? Once upon a time the party platforms said it all. General Zachary Taylor was held to silence as a presidential candidate in 1848, and Abraham Lincoln never gave a campaign speech in 1860: Lincoln, because he might have had more to say, and Taylor because he had nothing at all to say. In those days a party spoke with the single voice of its convention platform, but today no candidate is bound to vote or govern by a party's official policy.

In any case, for a platform with real bite to it, one has always had to go to the minor parties. Consider the 1912 platform of one such minor party. It called not only for women's suffrage but for abolition of child labor in mines and factories, for direct election of U.S. senators, for a single presidential term of six years, for the initiative, referendum, and recall, for graduated income and inheritance taxes, for public ownership and conservation of natural resources, for reclamation of wastelands, for public regulation of interstate corporations, and for a six-day workweek. This was the platform of the Prohibition party, which had been calling for these sorts of things since 1872.

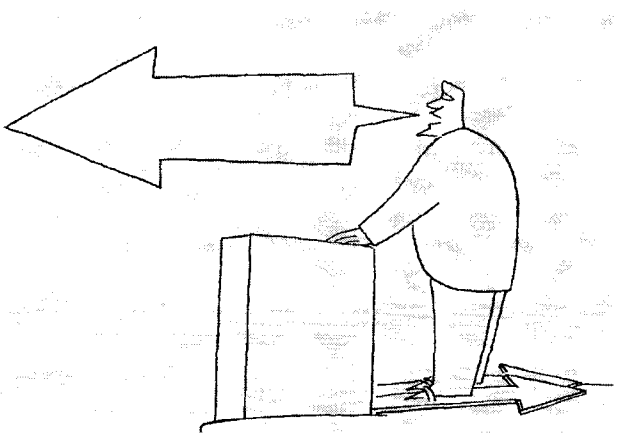
The major parties, by contrast, are broad coalitions, not natural clans or movements, and the terms of their negotiated accords may shift from election to election. To look into the eyes of the Democrats or the Republicans and find their enduring character, one must look down the years.

The Democrats, the nation's eldest party, may be known best by two contentious and persistent stands taken over the years, each one in direct conflict with its rival party. One was a long and valiant advocacy of the exploited workers; the other was an acquiescence in the massive abuse of slavery. Today there is a third Great Matter upon which the character—possibly even the survival—of the party may well be invested: the abortion plank in the Democratic platform. Is this the party at its best: stubborn and gutsy in its determination that women shall be radically emancipated? Or is this the party at its worst: subjecting the most helpless to the ultimate abuse? Few Democrats know their political history well enough to put this question in context. To grasp the significance of the party's prochoice policy, one has to look back at the two other Great Matters on which their party has taken such determined stands.

In 1848 the Democrats repudiated legislation "for the benefit of the few at the expense of the many." That became a signature phrase the party would use year after year. The "few" were invariably the affluent, and the "many" were those who depended on them for employment. The Democrats became the consistent backers of those many who were at the mercy of those few.

In 1868, the Democrats' platform resolved that "this convention sympathize cordially with the workingmen of the United States in their efforts to protect the rights and interests of the laboring classes of the country." While the Democrats were expressing their sympathy for the "laboring classes," the Republican platform was soberly recording its concern about how to pay off the war debt, reduce taxation, and restore the nation's credit. These two partisan priorities were not ultimately hostile to one another, but they were part of what it meant at the time to be a Democrat or a Republican.

By 1880 the Democrats took sides more openly: "The



ISHMAEL LAW *is the pseudonym of a lifelong Democrat and an avid reader of political platforms.*

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Democratic party is the friend of labor and the laboring man, and pledges itself to protect him." In 1884: "We favor the repeal of all laws restricting the free action of labor, and the enactment of laws by which labor organizations may be incorporated." In 1888, when rich and poor were being taxed at the same rate, they denounced taxation at a single rate as unfair to the workers.

The Republicans, meanwhile, defended high tariffs, claiming that they kept American wages high by keeping out cheap foreign imports. The Democrats replied that the duties were really meant to protect American corporations from competition and keep wages low: "There have been ten reductions of the wages of the laboring man to one increase" (1892).

The last years of the century saw the labor issue break into violence: the Haymarket Square riot (1886), the Homestead strike (1892), the Pullman strike (1894). Popular anger at corporate trusts, which conspired to avoid price-lowering competition and used violence to break unions, produced the Sherman Anti-Trust Act of 1890. But Republican prosecutors failed to draw much corporate blood with it, and Republican judges turned it instead against the workers. Strikes and other industrial actions were enjoined as criminal acts in violation of commercial competition. The Democratic platform of 1892 denounced the Sherman Act as "a cowardly makeshift." Trusts, whose corporate owners funded the Republican party, were "designed to enable capital to secure more than its just share of the joint product of Capital and Labor."

Democratic advocacy went on relentlessly over the years. Here are some of the causes they fought for: arbitration instead of the strike or lockout (1896); a strong Interstate Commerce Commission to protect free competition (1904); the eight-hour working day (1904); a graduated income tax (1908); employer liability for injuries or death on the job (1908); inspection of health conditions in the workplace (1908); public vocational education and agricultural extension (1908); regulation of utilities (1908); the six-day working week, special workplace protections for women, and pensions for the retired and the disabled (1916); the right to collective bargaining in industry and to co-operative marketing in agriculture (1920); vocational education for disabled war veterans (1920) and other disabled persons (1948), and employment opportunities for them (1952) and for the mentally retarded (1972); Social Security for the unemployed, aged, orphaned, crippled and blind (1936); crop insurance (1940); improvement of employment, safety, and health of migratory workers and their children, and day-care centers for children of working mothers (1952); supplemental food programs for the poor and lowered retirement ages for women and the disabled (1956); and maternity benefits for employed mothers (1972).

Democrats rejected the giveaway of public lands to the railroads instead of to homesteaders (1868); blacklists (1900); sweatshops and child labor, convict and coolie labor contracts (1892); the Taft-Hartley Act (1948); employment discrimination on grounds of age (1960); discrimination in federal or federally assisted housing (1960); and reverse discrimination through employment quotas (1964).

There are two facts to keep in mind when one assesses this long roster of advocacy for the employed. First, Republicans eventually acquiesced in many of these Democratic initiatives. But on the subject of employee welfare the Democrats always had the initiative and the Republicans were reactive, and sometimes reactionary as well.

A second matter for reflection: many of the chief prolabor measures were advocated first by minority parties. It was the Labor Reform party that first complained about coolie labor and called for the eight-hour day; the Union Labor party that first demanded equal pay for women and a graduated income tax; the Social Democratic party (later to become the Socialist party) that first outlined a national insurance plan for injury, unemployment, and retirement.

The minority parties could be bolder because they were more alienated from the mainstream. Their planks had splinters. For example, in 1904 Eugene Debs's Socialists had this to say about the class struggle between capitalists and workers:

> Between these two classes there can be no possible compromise or identity of interest....There can be no possible basis for social peace, for individual freedom, for mental and moral harmony, except in the conscious and complete triumph of the working class as the only class that has the right or power to be.

The Democrats, defending the lower economic strata of society from measures "for the benefit of the few at the expense of the many," had a different vision. They saw a struggle underway, yet a struggle between parties that shared a community of interests. In the same campaign when Debs's Socialists had their savage say, Democrats said: "Capital and Labor ought not to be enemies. Each is necessary to the other. Each has its rights, but the rights of labor are certainly no less 'vested,' no less 'sacred' and no less 'inalienable' than the rights of capital." In 1920 the Democrats proclaimed: "Labor is not a commodity; it is human. Those who labor have rights, and the national security and safety depend upon a just recognition of those rights and the conservation of the strength of the workers and their families in the interest of sound-hearted and sound-headed men, women, and children."

The Democratic struggle was not to annihilate capital or the employing classes as the Socialists would, nor to turn a blind eye on their abuses as the Republicans did. It was to assert the claims of those at a disadvantage until the majority saw them as a claim on their consciences. That is what a major political party must do, and what the Democratic party has so consistently done on behalf of the employed.

There is another story and another struggle that gives no comfort to the Democrats. Their party was ardently involved, but not as an initiative-taker, and not as an advocate of the misused. Before the 1844 election, the Liberty (abolitionist) party issued a platform that reviled slavery as "the grossest form and most revolting manifestation of despotism." That year, both major parties looked the other way—with a fixed stare. The Whigs made one cryptic reference to "the protection

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of the domestic labor of the country," while the Democrats resolved that "Congress has no power, under the Constitution, to interfere with or control the domestic institutions of the several States."

In the next election the abolitionists thundered more loudly that "Congress has no more power to make a Slave than to make a King." The Democrats still deplored enactments "for the benefit of the few at the expense of the many," but had nothing more to reply to the abolitionists than to repeat their 1844 statement. The Whigs issued no official platform.

In 1852 both major parties, the Democrats and the Whigs, continued to avoid the Great Matter. The abolitionists, now called the Free Democratic party, recruited many Whigs whose consciences could not survive their own convention, and issued another call to reject slavery which was "a sin against God and a crime against man," and beyond the limited constitutional powers of the Federal Government to extend or sustain.

By 1856 the Whigs dead-ended as a major party, still deploring the "agitation" convulsing the nation, which they explained by "geographical distinctions." The Democrats still insisted they did not even want the subject of slavery argued in public. It is fair to say that the Whig party disintegrated because its membership had more conscience than those in control, while the Democrats survived for want of enough conscience at any level to cause terminal stress. The new Republicans, in sharp contrast, claimed it was "the imperative duty of Congress to prohibit in the Territories those twin relics of barbarism, Polygamy, and Slavery."

By 1860 the Democrats merely said they would rest their consciences upon the Supreme Court's recent *Dred Scott* decision, which had asserted the liberties of owners over their private property.

By 1868 the war was over and Lincoln gone, and the Democratic platform began by submissively "recognizing the questions of slavery and secession as having been settled for all time to come." By 1872 they seemed more whole-hearted: "We recognize the equality of all men before the law, and hold that it is the duty of the Government in its dealings with the people to mete out equal and exact justice to all, of whatever nativity, race, color or persuasion, religion or politics."

One might imagine the parties had grown together within a national consensus about equality for blacks. But the Republicans disbelieved the sincerity of their opponents. "The recent amendments to the Constitution," their 1872 platform stated, "should be cordially sustained because they are right, not merely tolerated because they are law."

One must always be wary of taking any political plank at face value. The very year the Democrats finally professed their belief in racial equality, the Republicans finally disavowed the land giveaways to the railroads and large corporations. Yet the Democrats continued to resist the enfranchisement of the blacks, and the Republicans went on giving away public real estate to their wealthy patrons.

Still, as the years passed, it was clearly the Republicans who took the public initiatives on behalf of the negro, and the Democrats who eventually came to join them on the issues, point by reluctant point. It was, obviously, the reverse of the roles they played on behalf of the working class.

The Republicans clamored for "complete liberty and exact equality in the enjoyment of all civil, political, and public rights" (1872). They demanded that such laws be "enacted and enforced as will secure to every citizen, be he rich or poor, native or foreign-born, white or black, this sovereign right [the ballot], guaranteed by the Constitution" (1892). They repeatedly denounced lynching (1896), racial discrimination in the civil service and the military (1940), and segregation within federal jurisdiction (1956).

The Democrats usually made similar statements: but always later, and less ardently. And, to complete the obvious symmetry with their political history of advocacy for the working class, the Socialists and the Communists often outdid the Republicans in their appeals for equal rights for blacks.

It is widely known, of course, that as of the 1960s there was a shift of initiative and the Democrats took the lead on behalf of minorities. But in our nation's history this was very late. In general, the issue of racial justice puts the Democratic party to the blush, while the issue of economic justice shows their Republican opponents to disadvantage. Yet in both cases, the laggard party did traipse along, goaded ahead by the party of greater conscience. And it is accurate to say that both parties maintained a theoretical devotion to the Founders' doctrine of equality for all, and protection for the disadvantaged. While each party advocated the cause of its chosen victim class, both admitted that the class with rival interests had also to be accommodated, not annihilated. Neither looked for the "complete triumph" of the abused class over those who had them in their power and sacrificed them to their own interests.

But the lessons of the past are provocative background for the controversies of the present. And today only one controversy is as implacable as the struggles for workers' rights and freedom for slaves. It is the abortion issue.

Over the years the two major parties have largely spoken with one voice about the needs and rights of women. The Republicans were the first to take up many issues. They were against polygamy (1856); for equal rights in property relationships for wives, mothers, and widows, and for the appointment and election of women to offices of public trust (1876); for equal pay for equal work for women (1896); for limited hours of work for women and special vocational training for their aptitudes (1920); for an amendment to the Constitution assuring equal rights to women (1940); for strengthened public programs of maternal and child health care (1944); for a restored personal tax exemption designed to relieve the "maternalization of poverty" among the working poor (1984); and for a law against pornography, especially child pornography (1988). The Democrats have opposed discrimination against women in job classifications and in naturalization regulations (1920); they supported publicly funded maternity and health care for wives and children of the military (1952); they included women as a protected class under the Civil Rights Act of 1964; they asked for

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publicly provided prenatal and postnatal health care for low-income mothers and children (1968); for anti-discrimination protection for women in education, and for maternal leave and disability benefits for all working women (1972); for supplemental food programs for low-income pregnant women and infants, restored school meals, and protection against child abuse (1984); and for family leave policies for employees with ailing parents or children (1988).

Advocacy for women has most typically gone hand-in-hand with advocacy for children. Health care, conditions of employment, nutrition, maternity leave and benefits, day care, equal opportunity and remuneration: all have been construed as protective of women and their children. Many of the planks, especially in the earlier years, dealt with women's status in public life and in the workplace, but those concerns bear as well upon the welfare of their children, especially in homes where the woman is the only parent present or is working.

Now the political parties are faced abruptly with a very different kind of claim: that a mother should enjoy the lawful freedom, not simply to pursue her own choices independently, but to remove an unborn offspring who stands in the way.

After the *Wade* and *Bolton* decisions of 1973, the two major parties crafted their respective planks for the 1976 contest. The Democrats thought it best to defer to the Supreme Court. "We fully recognize the religious and ethical nature of the concerns which many Americans have on the subject of abortion. We feel, however, that it is undesirable to attempt to amend the U.S. Constitution to overturn the Supreme Court decision." The Republicans admitted their membership was divided, but endorsed the efforts of those who sought a constitutional amendment "to restore protection of the right to life for unborn children."

> The question of abortion is one of the most difficult and controversial of our time. It is undoubtedly a moral and personal issue but it also involves complex issues relating to medical science and criminal justice. There are those in our party who favor complete support for the Supreme Court's decision which permits abortion on demand. There are others who share sincere convictions that the Supreme Court's decision must be changed by a constitutional amendment prohibiting all abortions. Others have yet to take a position, or they have assumed a stance somewhere in between polar positions....
>
> We protest the Supreme Court's intrusion into the family structure through its denial of the parents' obligation and right to guide their minor children. The Republican party favors a continuance of the public dialogue on abortion and supports the efforts of those who seek enactment of a constitutional amendment to restore protection of the right to life for unborn children.

Since then the party platforms have sharpened their manifestos. In 1980 the Democrats went on record in favor of abortion on demand, subsidized if need be; the Republicans took the opposite position. In 1984 the two planks were more sharply hewn. The Democrats recognized "reproductive freedom as a fundamental right" with a claim to public funding. The Republicans opposed funding for both abortion providers and promoters, and insisted "the unborn child has a fundamental individual right to life which cannot be infringed." The platforms of 1988 and 1992 continue the dispute, but the rancor has increased now that the *Webster* and *Casey* decisions have partially restored the issue of abortion to the political process.

Some Democrats accuse their party of standing on the guilty side of a grave abuse and believe that their party's official position on abortion is consistent, not with their traditional protection of the workers, but with their abandonment of the slaves. How could that be? They are the party that stands up for refugees, migrants, minorities, women, children, the handicapped, the unemployed, the aged. But long memory is sobering. At the very time when they were the party that first stood up for the laboring poor and held out America as "the refuge of the oppressed from every land," the Democrats also despised and rejected the poorest of the poor: the Chinese laborers whom their platforms called "a race not sprung from the same great parent stock, and in fact now by law denied citizenship through naturalization as being unaccustomed to the traditions of a progressive civilization, one exercised in liberty under equal laws." Orientals were "servile races, unfitted by habits, training, religion or kindred, for absorption into the great body of our people." The party was inconsistent then; it can be inconsistent now.

Theirs is the party, prolife Democrats have grounds to argue, which knew from the start that the entrepreneur and the laborer, whatever their mutual grievances, had intertwined interests and—most importantly—inviolable human dignity. It is the party

Virginia Volini Marciniak

Pain, you are my oldest friend,
Since birth when, pummeling, you crushed my skull,
And kicked me screaming. What would I have done
Had you not been there to help my mother, Pain?

I have hated you since then,
As your fingers twist about my knees,
Your ugliness hops before my eyes. I welcome your departure.
Fortunately, business took you many places.

How dare you interrupt my life again?
Your good-day smile carved by a thousand ice picks,
Your handshake springing my nerves, and paralyzing.

My oldest friend, I meet you here again.
You live so close now, our paths cross often.
What? You are moving into my house?
You are wearing my clothes?

Note: This untitled poem was found among papers left by Virginia Volini Marciniak, who died of cancer on October 21, 1990.

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which was bloodily forced to learn that whites and blacks share the same intertwined needs and follies and—most importantly—human dignity. It is the party that has traditionally made appeal for women and children together, since neither prospers or suffers without the other sharing both welfare and human dignity. It is the party that at its 1988 convention declared: "We believe that this nation needs to invest in its children on the front side of life." How, then, could this party abandon the frontmost children, whenever they are unwanted, and say they are a commodity, not human; transform them from the rank of children to the likeness of things, discards, stripped of human dignity? That is more Debs than Democrat.

Democrats had resolved that the deprivation of one individual must never be the price of another's betterment. In the eyes of those who see the present platform as an apostasy from that earlier commitment, the party needs desperately to learn that the empowerment of one burdened individual must never justify the annihilation of another. One class of people ought never be put utterly at the disposal of another.

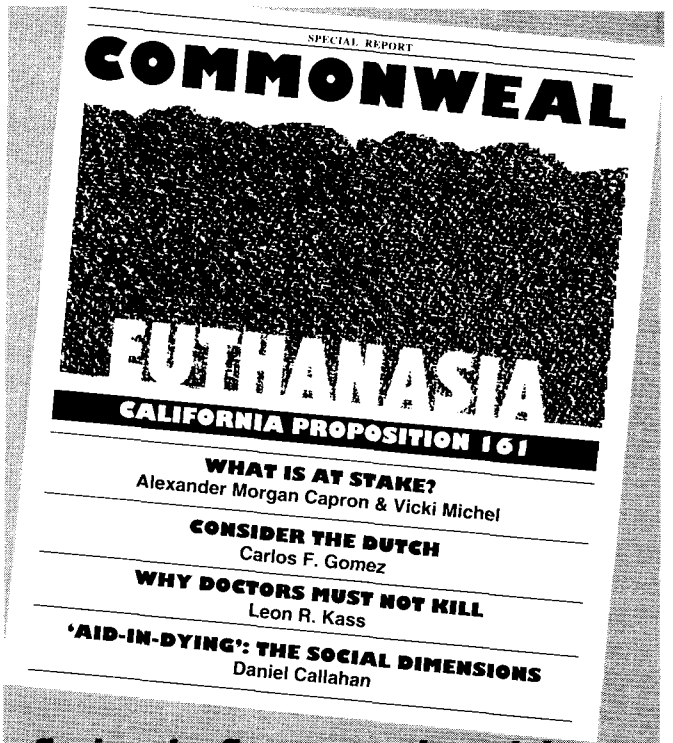
The party seems again to have taken the part of private choice, as it did a century-and-a-half ago: the private choice to do whatever one wishes with another. This evokes Lincoln, that old baiter of Democrats. His opponent was arguing for "popular sovereignty," their equivalent then of today's "freedom of choice." The argument was that while no one should be obliged to have slaves, so also no one should be denied the choice to have them. What this freedom of choice really meant, Lincoln said, was "that *if any one man, choose to enslave another, no third man shall be allowed to object.*" (The italics are his; you can hear his voice rising on them.)

Lincoln's ally, William Seward, said in 1858 that the nation was gripped in "an irrepressible conflict between opposing and enduring forces." It was not a matter of give-and-take, but of life-or-death, and hence could never be a matter of peaceable compromise. Lincoln's words in the same year are better known: "In *my* opinion, it [agitation to end slavery] *will* not cease, until a *crisis* shall have been reached, and passed. 'A house divided against itself cannot stand.' I believe this Government cannot permanently endure half *slave* and half *free*. I do not expect the Union to be *dissolved*—I do not expect the house to *fall*—but I *do* expect that it will cease to be divided. It will become *all* one thing or *all* the other."

The Union staggered, but it did stand. The major parties at the time did not. In one year, 1956, the Whig party was dismembered and destroyed. The Democratic party, morally disgraced, elected only two presidents in the next seventy-two years. Both Whigs and Democrats had refused to listen to a voice of conscience, soft yet hoarse with rage, which had finally persuaded enough citizens that slavery, whatever its constitutional or judicial standing, was a moral and political outrage. To put one human entirely at the mercy of another was a practice so ruthless that they could no longer stand by and allow it.

It is not clear which would be worse for the Democratic party now: to repeat the political débacle of the Whigs, who disappeared in 1856, or the moral débacle of the Democrats, who survived in 1856. □

Life & death in California



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WHEN THE SAINTS WENT MARCHING OUT

RE-IMAGINING HOLINESS TWO DECADES LATER

RICHARD MAZZIOTTA

From time immemorial Catholic Christianity has reserved a special place for the cult of the saints. Devotion to the saints found expression everywhere: parish churches were named for them; their relics were venerated; their statues were displayed; and the feasts of certain saints were the subject of folk festivals. Catholics wore medals, assumed saints' names at baptism, and journeyed on pilgrimages to the shrines of saints. Monastic communities rose in the middle of the night to listen to the stories of saints on their feast days and to hear selections from their writings chanted in Matins. The saints were much more than role models. As icons of the risen Christ—ones whose witness makes Christ present—they were an indispensable part of piety and faith. Through communion with them, Christians encountered Jesus Christ as he continued to manifest his Resurrection in the church.

How does that traditional understanding and appreciation of the saints fit into modern American Catholicism? I would argue that the renewed emphasis on Christ-centered Christian spirituality in the post-Vatican II church, most powerfully shaped by the reformed liturgy and calendar, has unintentionally resulted in a diminution if not the displacement of the saints.

Nearly thirty years after Vatican II, Catholic faith is more squarely centered on Jesus Christ than many—especially the church's critics—could ever have imagined. Features of the tradition which historically had distracted this focus—Mary and the saints, the anathemas against other religions, and the quirky devotional practices of some Catholics—have been cut down to size. Whatever the ecclesiastical or theological issues facing today's church, the centrality of Jesus Christ is understood by all parties as paramount.

As the axiom *lex orandi, lex credendi* (literally, "the law of prayer is the law of belief"; or "worship shapes belief") suggests, great change begins in worship. I believe the liturgical renewal authorized by the council is responsible for the rise of what I've called Christ-centered Catholicism. But need devotion to the saints stand in competition to Christ-centered Catholicism? I don't think so. On the contrary, the cult of the saints is a source—now largely untapped—capable of enlarging and strengthening faith.

REV. RICHARD MAZZIOTTA *teaches in the religious studies department at Stonehill College in North Easton, Massachusetts.*

Baptism is an important example of the move to Christ-centered Catholicism. Its meaning has been the subject of intense debate. No matter what position one endorses on the various questions associated with this sacrament, one change is clear: baptism is no longer merely a purification rite from Original Sin. The biblical paradigms, new texts, normative setting at the Paschal vigil, and immersion in the water bath—all provisions of the new ritual—teach that baptism is death and resurrection into Christ. To correct old, well-worn language, it is baptism, not ordination, which makes one an *alter Christus*...another Christ.

The liturgical calendar and the lectionary are two other less obvious, but no less significant, reforms that have established Christ-centered Catholicism. Both bear special responsibility for what has occurred to the saints. In calling for the preparation of a new calendar, the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (1963) affirmed the two poles between which the rhythm of church's worship occurs: first, the weekly Sunday feast; and second, the annual festival of Easter. The constitution called for the restoration of Sunday as the day each week in which the church "keeps the memory of [the] Resurrection." Similarly, what Sunday is to be for the week, Easter is for the entire year. Only with the importance of Sunday and of Easter reaffirmed does the constitution acknowledge a role for the feasts of Mary, the martyrs, and saints in general.

Fulfilling the council's mandate, the 1969 revised calendar greatly affected devotion to the saints: first, it reaffirmed the

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importance of Sunday, Easter, and the liturgical seasons; and second, it vastly reduced in number the saints awarded a place on the calendar. The paring of the calendar left many open spaces, thus creating a larger number of "ferials"—days on which no feast is appointed—than the church had known in centuries.

Ferials are not new. The calendar of Trent (1568) had provided for them. However, before Vatican II, ferials were readily dispensed with. Usually Masses for the dead or votive Masses replaced them. Ferials have now assumed a positive identity and are preferred over the observances surrounding obscure saints. By their use, Sunday is extended throughout the week, thus both enhancing the character of Sunday worship and diminishing the unique liturgical piety of weekday Masses. This attenuation of the saints is compounded by the fact that even the saints who have survived are generally given little special attention in the daily liturgy. Prior to Vatican II, the Scriptures usually read on a minor saint's day were selected from a standard or "common" set of readings proper to virgins, confessors, martyrs, bishops, etc. The usual practice now, however, is for the readings to follow the weekday lectionary readings which are ongoing and seasonal in theme. The observance of a saint means little more than celebrating the liturgy in a vestment of different color than Sunday's, and perhaps one or two different prayers. Too often the Scripture and the homily will refer to the season, not the saint. The coordination of sacramentary, music, vesture, lectionary, and preaching, all required for an effective celebration of a saint's feast, is a rarity.

A few months after the new calendar was issued, the Lectionary for Mass appeared. The first objective of the calendar, the restoration of the Lord's Day, was reenforced by the new lectionary and the renaissance it inaugurated in biblical preaching. The shift from topical sermon to biblical homily, promoted by the lectionary, has had a vast impact on Catholic thought and practice. With the homily preferred over the sermon, the Jesus of the gospels inescapably has become almost the sole topic of preaching. The Sunday gospels provide a sustained and progressive Christological program, which, uncomplemented by the perspective of tradition, equates Christianity almost solely with the gospel figure of Jesus. Whereas Catholic Christianity has always sought to identify the risen Christ in an encounter with him in the living tradition, now, with preaching so biblical, Catholicism has found itself cast loose from its familiar moorings. When the Jesus of the gospels becomes the subject of every homily, he inevitably becomes our exclusive model. This reduces the lived incarnational dimension of Christianity, which offered, however fantastic might have been its exaggerations, devotion to the saints. Instead of human figures with whose likeness to Christ one might identify, Jesus has become the universal patron saint. With the saints eclipsed by Christ, little wonder that there has been such speculation in Catholicism regarding the humanity of Jesus, his conception, his call to mission, the failure he experienced, and even his doubt. This is where the unchallenged success of lectionary preaching has led the church. One wonders if the authors of the calendar and the lectionary anticipated how a dominical liturgy would not only sharply define Sundays, but, by displacing the saints, diminish the church's imagination of and hope for the resurrection of all the dead.

Christianity must be nothing but Christ-centered, argue many sincere Catholics. If anything, the old devotion to the saints trespassed beyond reason and all bounds. If the faith is now unambiguously Christ-centered, it is argued, and if, in the process, the saints have been moved to the periphery, this is all for the good.

But, I would maintain, it is an error to limit the saints to serving as mere role models. The tradition has always upheld that in our communion with the saints, Christians, in fact, encounter Christ. *Lumen Gentium* explains the tradition thus: "It is not only by the title of example that we cherish the memory of those in heaven. In the lives of those who shared in our humanity and yet were transformed into especially successful images of Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 3:18), God vividly manifests to [us] his presence and his face."

While a Christianity that finds its inspiration in the Jesus of the gospels might be nourished by preaching on Christ's passage through locked doors, or on the appearance of Christ to the disciples fishing in Peter's boat, such a narrow homiletic forecloses the encounter with Christ as he is also known in the life of the community and in the lives of the saints. Under various titles, most notably, the Mystical Body of Christ and the Communion of Saints, the church has upheld this broader intuition and conviction.

The validity of encountering Christ in this traditional Catholic fashion is everywhere evident. In fact, the New Testament itself introduces it, as it quickly moves beyond Easter appearances to accounts of the risen Christ revealing himself in others. En route to Damascus, Saul is blinded and interrogated by heaven: "'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' He asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' The reply came, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting'" (Acts 9:4-5).

Paul teaches that the community is the Body of Christ when he castigates the Corinthians for celebrating the Eucharist amid grave incivility: "For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgment against themselves" (1 Cor. 11:29).

In Matthew, judgment day holds reversals and surprises for all. The king pronounces, "Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me" (Matt. 25:45). It is more than in the community, however, that the risen Jesus is encountered. From its beginning, the church perceived in the martyrs—the first saints—the ultimate achievement. Their imitation of Christ was perfect to the point of likeness to Jesus in his suffering death. In this, the martyrs provided more than *example*. They served as living icons through whom Christians could encounter the Lord. This identity is nowhere more explicit than in the description in Acts of the Apostles of the first martyrdom. The death of Stephen is patterned upon that of Jesus: "While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them,'

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and with that he died" (Acts 7:59-60).

Accounts of the ancient martyrs, extant from early centuries, are as impressive in their vividness as they are significant in their numbers. Their iconic relationship to the crucified Lord so explicit, the martyrs exercised a formative influence upon the church during its initial centuries.

A provocative example is the second-century account of several martyrs which occurred in Vienne and Lyons. Christians from the East had settled in these cities of Roman Gaul during the first and second centuries. A large number were martyred in A.D. 177. The account describes the crucifixion of the slave woman Blandina. The reasons offered by the Vatican against the ordination of women make it particularly relevant today:

> Blandina hung on her post, exposed as bait for the wild animals. She hung in the form of a cross, and by her fervent prayer she stirred intense enthusiasm in those who were undergoing their own ordeal. In their torment, with their physical eyes, they saw in the person of their sister him who was crucified for them, that he might convince all who believe in him that all who suffer for Christ's glory will have eternal fellowship in the living God.

After this early understanding of sainthood, the tradition adapted. Sainthood was broadened beyond martyrdom and its imitative significance to include a new category, confessors. These were those who had suffered torture or imprisonment for the faith, but not death itself.

When Christianity was afforded imperial sanction in the fourth century, imprisonments and executions abated. Sainthood needed to be interpreted even more liberally. Without martyrs or the imprisoned from whom to choose, the church turned to nuns, monks, and desert eremites. Their entire lives had been delivered over to the lived martyrdom, as it were, of prayer, self-denial, and good deeds. Eventually the church would forsake entirely the requirement of martyrdom, even loosely defined, for recognition of sanctity.

In diminishing the church's ancient sense of the saint as icon of Christ, the post-Vatican II church has also lost the insight of Paul: "All of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another" (2 Cor. 3:17-18). Unlike our forebears in the faith, modern Christians rarely regard the saints as manifestations of the crucified and risen Lord. The few exceptions—for example, the stigmatic Francis of Assisi—prove the rule. Perhaps the reason why so many support the sidelining of the saints is because the meaning of sainthood had been allowed to become so diffuse.

Christ-centered Christianity has compromised an indispensable expression of Catholicism. How can we reassert the saints, not only without prejudice to Christ-centeredness, but as support to it? I offer eight suggestions:

1. Parish and religious communities restore liturgical and cultural celebrations of those saints who enjoy regional, national, or particular significance, and that they do this on weekdays.

2. As everything from the St. Patrick's Day Parade to St. Joseph's Day pastries so amply show, it is the genius of Catholic tradition that faith and culture be one. Customs that honor the saints should be esteemed. Where they have been lost, restored. Where they are lacking, created.

3. A saint's name should be taken at baptism. Are we not raising a generation of Heathers that one day will rise against us?

4. Conscious of how poorly the hyperbole that marked most Christian hagiography serves today's critical age, pastoral scholarship should provide new, inventive methods for telling the stories of the saints.

5. Reform in the process of naming saints should continue, so that the canon better shows the risen Lord revealed in the lives of all the baptized, of women as well as men, of lay as well as cleric, of those from South and East, as well as those of North and West.

6. With common sense and mature judgment prevailing, that the stories of the saints should be restored to religious formation and preaching.

7. Appreciation of the Communion of Saints should be restored, and, with it, renewed recourse to the intercessory power of the saints.

8. Let East meet West. The Roman Catholic tradition has everything to learn from Orthodoxy's reverence of icons. What is needed now is a rediscovery of the prime theological insight that the saints are important because they are an encounter with Jesus Christ. It is this that Gerard Manley Hopkins acknowledges with praise and wonder in "As Kingfishers Catch Fire":

> Í say more: the just man justices;
> Keeps gráce: thát keeps all his goings graces;
> Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is—
> Chríst. For Christ plays in ten thousand places,
> Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
> To the Father through the features of men's faces. □

SCREEN

NOUVEAU ALLEN

'HUSBANDS AND WIVES'

No Woody Allen film runs its course without at least one good quip on its sound track. Judy Davis gets to deliver a great one in *Husbands and Wives* when, as a middle-aged woman newly separated from her husband and trying to reenter the dating game, she fends off the advances of an aspiring lover with the plea that he's coming on to her too fast: "Metabolically, it's not my rhythm." And Davis's delivery is so cleverly shaded, so tremulous yet incisive, that Allen's mockery of listen-to-your-body newspeak seems as witty as a line from Congreve or Wilde.

Yet what's remarkable about Allen's latest effort is that so little of it depends upon his talent for such quips or for language in general. In fact, though the script tours familiar Allen

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territory—the anguished love lives of successful professionals living in or near Manhattan—its method is a true departure for Allen. In all his previous features, good or bad, the emotions of his characters registered primarily through the dialogue, and the dialogue was written and delivered in the basic theatrical mode that prevails both in plays and movies: linear, pregnant with meaning and wit, and necessarily more lucid and emphatic than 99.5 percent of the talk we hear in everyday life. And such dialogue, on screen or stage, is a major determinant of what the director does. In all previous Allen movies, the dialogue determined whether the camera should be near or far, still or mobile.

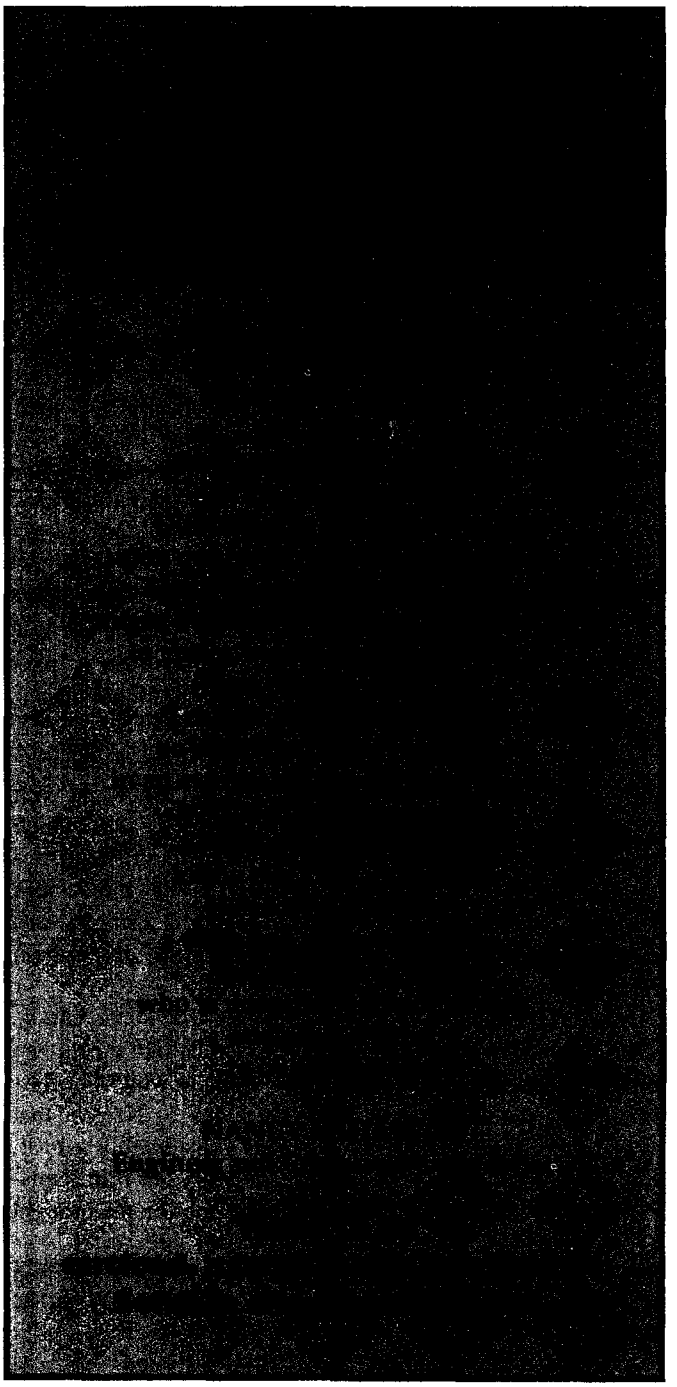
Not so in *Husbands and Wives*. First, despite the occasional witty exchange, most of the dialogue is loaded with the trivialities, the nonsequiturs, the fruitless excursions away from the main point, the interruptions and self-interruptions we hear in everyday life and in documentaries. The actors have been directed not only to overlap their lines but often to speak all at once, to trail off in midsentence, to take little pauses in unexpected places, to replace intended words with glances that preempt words. All this brings us much closer to the jagged discourse of *cinéma vérité* than to the lucid volleying of comedy. The *bon mot* and the riposte have been devalued; what counts in this movie is the tangle, the buzz, the blur of heated arguments in expensive apartments where nobody listens to anybody except to refute what's just been said. The camera isn't cued by words but by currents of feeling.

Second, much of the camerawork (by Carlo di Palma) is handheld, constantly mobile, deliberately shaky. Even if the acting and dialogue were more conventional, such photography would destabilize them.

Third, borrowing from Jean Luc-Goddard, Allen interrupts his narrative several times to have his characters interviewed by an unidentified interrogator on the other side of the camera. This strategy contributes to giving *Husbands and Wives* the texture of a case study, a documentary in the making.

Does the method match the matter? The story is a symmetrical one: one married pair, Sydney Pollack and Judy Davis, announce their separation to their friends, Mia Farrow and Woody Allen, a seemingly stable couple. By the end of the movie, Pollack and Davis have learned they can't live without each other while Farrow and Allen, their long-suppressed differences and hostilities shaken to the surface by the discord between their friends, divorce. Another director, Eric Rohmer, say, might have accentuated the formal simplicity of the story by shooting with an anchored, motionless camera and by employing unobtrusive cuts. Allen, however, isn't trying to choreograph an elegant dance of love and loss, but instead wants to plunge us into a free-for-all of the emotions in which lovers flail. His new filmic style conveys this emotional chaos well.

But he goes overboard. The nearly nonstop jitteriness (only the Goddardesque interviews and a couple of quiet scenes were shot with a steady camera) is applied even to scenes that might have benefited from a steadier approach. When we are being constantly hustled through the action (as if the director had us by the scruff of the neck), a sort of visual bullying seems to be



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going on. We are always being told where to look, never allowed to search the frame for whatever details we can pick up for ourselves. Of course, all good directors ultimately determine what we look at in each shot, but there is a difference between subtly guiding the eyes and taking onlookers by the throat.

Though Allen's own performance is a disaster (his voice has become unbearable in that he ends every other sentence on a screech or a whine), all the other actors respond beautifully to his direction. Juliette Lewis as a literary-minded postnymphet annoys initially by projecting solipsism that at first seems more the actress's than the character's. But gradually her performance blooms and fascinates, especially in a scene in which she picks her writing teacher's latest novel to pieces but prefaces each barb with an enchanting and self-enchanting smile. Liam Neeson, as Davis's prospective lover, seems at first nothing but a hunk with a good baritone voice but, by the end of the movie, has created a believable man so ridden with self-doubt that he is ready to acquiesce in a marriage that will bring him not joy but only a temporary equilibrium. Mia Farrow gives her rather mousy, self-pitying character interesting shades of unspoken fierceness that justify one character's description of her as "passive-aggressive." One gets a glimpse of the emotional buccaneer within the waif.

But Sydney Pollack and Judy Davis give the best performances, and their naturalism, leashed by crack timing and laced with wit, justify Allen's method. For instance, in a scene in which Pollack, having a verbal brawl with his wife and girlfriend, notices his wife's lover on the sidelines and invites him to join the fracas, Pollack gets a laugh not by inflecting a single word or phrase but simply by letting an extra burst of desperation and bewilderment infuse his entire body.

Davis's character is so self-dramatizing that Davis can be theatrical without detracting from the naturalism of the movie. And her theatricality is delicious. In a scene in which she systematically yet unself-consciously explains to Neeson that every single stage of their last date was considerably subpar, Davis makes us laugh at her cruelty, and pity her brittle misery all at once. Only a great comedienne could have brought this scene off.

Monotonous in visual style, predictable in its plot, catering too exclusively to urban sophisticates who want to laugh affectionately, too affectionately, at themselves, *Husbands and Wives* isn't satisfying. Yet Woody Allen has made an interesting movie that at least deserves to outlive the scandal-sheet headlines that now serve as its unofficial advertising.

RICHARD ALLEVA

"It's Ken. He's been like this since he split up with Barbie."

MEDIA

PERFECT FOOLS

LENNY, GEORGE, RICHARD & FRANK

I've always wanted to write a short story with the title "Inside Room 101." Remember Orwell's *1984*, when Big Brother's guys have caught Winston Smith and they're about to sear his brain by taking him into Room 101, and Winston asks what's *in* Room 101, and they tell him, everybody knows what's in Room 101, what's in Room 101 is the worst thing in the world? Well, *I* know what's in Room 101. It's doing standup comedy.

I want to urge upon you the raw terror of doing standup, among other reasons so that you'll never again, if you catch a bad comic or even a good comic on an off-night, have anything but the most profound and painful empathy for him/her. Look. A dancer can fall on his butt. A musician can screw up the chord changes and get hopelessly lost. An actress can blow her line. And you think, fervently, "Jesus, take me now!" But the dance goes on; the band keeps playing; somebody will keep up the dialogue: there's somewhere, for God's sake, to *go*.

Not with standup. There's *you*, and that's *all* there is. You *are* the gig, and the pacing and the subject and the delivery are all yours to play out, and—here comes the bad part—if you don't get the spontaneous blessing of laughter from The House *at least* every two minutes, then, old sport, You. Have. Failed. And you start to sweat, because you've got to finish your ten or twenty minutes, and you know The House can *see* you sweating. So you reach back into memory for the dirty stuff, but even your queer jokes don't get enough of a rise (omigod, are some of these guys gay?). So you get grosser: something's got to work, you don't *care* how vile you are, they have to *laugh*, damn them. Politics. Christ, that *has* to work. "And how about Dan Quayle?" you ask. Not even a giggle, waiting for the payoff. They're not The House anymore, they're The Beast, they're what's in Room 101, and they're feasting on the carcass of your ego, and you hope they all die in horrible pain. And you finish, drenched and impotent, but *still smiling*, and tell them what a great audience they've been and strut off, thinking about the bottle you're going to buy.

Why do you think they call it "dying on stage?"

Or, maybe more to the point, why would anybody subject himself to this level of risk? (You could, already, just walk onto the freeway.) The simple answer is that it isn't always like the nightmare I've described, and when it isn't, when everything is working, when you've got them and they're laughing *with*

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you, wanting you to be even funnier—and laughter *is* a blessing, a shared holy thing—the updraft, the grace, okay, the rush, is like nothing else you will ever know. Nothing.

The more complicated answer is—more complicated.

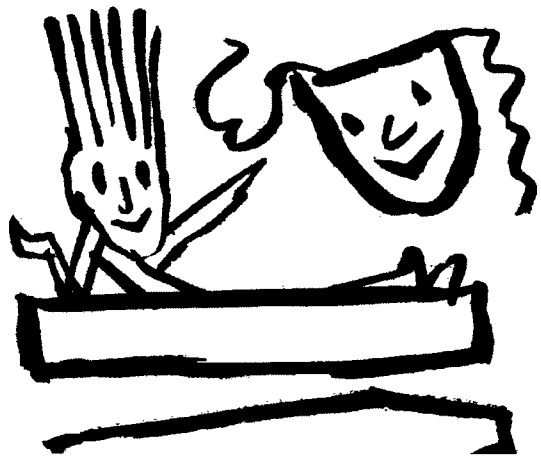
Standup as we know it is actually a young art—no older than jazz. It was in the 1910s, when New York impresarios (i.e., *machers*) got the idea of importing the European model of the "cabaret"—a dining and drinking place with a small and intimate stage or no stage at all—that the half-improvised comic monologue with frequent audience interplay became possible. (The great genius of the Marx Brothers, in fact, was to take the lunatic, near anarchic spontaneity of the "club act" and translate it back into the older, stodgier world of the Broadway play.) But, from Bert Lahr and Ed Wynn through Bob Hope and Jack Benny to Robin Williams and Bob "The Bobcat" Goldthwaite, the art has a secret, hierophantic lineage.

It is the lineage of the Court Fool. And as anyone who has read Enid Wellsford's great book of sixty years ago, *The Fool*, will understand, that is a rank of officially sanctioned chaos. As the shaman, the holy madman of archaic religion, as the slave who whispered in the ear of Roman generals in their triumphs, "Remember: you too will die," or as the mocking and reaffirming truth-tellers of Shakespearean comedy and of the unapproachable *King Lear*, the Fool's sacred function has always been to be a *carrier of chaos*: the incarnation of the disorderly—hence the fool's motley, Robin Williams's baggy pants, Richard Pryor's crimson suit—that reminds us on what a razor's edge our civilized order is balanced. The classic Fool still survives as the Joker in every deck of cards; and in the older games, he was the universal trump, overturning, in any suit, the hierarchy of Ace (God), King, Queen, and Jack (Prince): a laughing Grendel, the sublime gatecrasher: Groucho.

And we *need* that. We need a member of the tribe to take the risk, for which we will reward him richly, not just of describing the void inside us—that is mere satire—but of *being* that void, acting it out so that we can't help but watch and see it in ourselves. (The Prophets Jonah and Jeremiah hold union cards here, too.)

Of course, it's also showbiz: not all standups burn with the shamanic flame, by a long chalk. And, as with jazz performance, a lot less is really spontaneous than you want to think. Jazz players have "fake books": collections of phrases and whole choruses that can fit into any solo when inspiration fails. And comics have "schtick": verbal fakes, routines, and business to fill the holes in a not-going-well set. That's okay. It's the illusion—cancel that, the *myth*—of improv, of the un-preprogrammed, that sustains us. (Lévi-Strauss, in *Structural Anthropology*, tells about the tribal skeptic who learned all the tricks of psychic healing from the shaman in order to debunk him and then, because he saw that the tricks *worked* to help people, became a shaman himself: that's standup.)

But the two arts tug in opposite—primordially opposite—directions. A jazz solo begins in "chaos"—departure from the standard theme—and moves, in its own self-consistency, toward a reestablished and better order. A standup act begins with the "normal"—"Hey, I was in K-Mart this morning"—and coasts



as dangerously close as it can come to the complete inversion of the norm, flirting with the very entropic abyss the music keeps exorcising.

"Any *Niggers* here tonight?" That's the beginning of one of the most famous routines of Lenny Bruce—who is to standup what the charismatic Charlie Parker is to standup's Apollonian twin, jazz. The point of Lenny's bit was to take all the names we hurt one another with—*nigger, spick, kike, wop, mick*, etc.—and weave them into the dark fugue of cruelty that is the hidden theme song of at least half our kinder, gentler nation. And it was scary when he did it in 1965 and it's scary now. Not many comics since him—maybe, sometimes, George Carlin or Richard Pryor or Eddie Murphy—have gone as far or as self-destructively as Lenny Bruce did toward making themselves into the Perfect Fool—that's the Fool who just might not be able to come back from his incarnation of disorder. But, after decades of the elegantly irrelevant Benny and the contemptibly chauvinistic Hope, Lenny left his mark. No standup comic—and, I'd argue seriously, no American novelist—since his prime in the sixties has been able fully to step out from under his angry, hilarious, manic shadow. He was, and remains, everything that spotlights the full malice of the Pat Buchanans of our republic.

Thanks to the cable revolution, you can now catch standup comedy in the comfort of your home virtually any night of the week. A&E's "Evening at the Improv," especially, features, every time out, four or five young comics, ranging all the way from the brilliant to the dire. And there are the HBO comedy specials, and there's the Comedy Network, and like that.

And it's great. As the America of George Bush and his paymasters grows more and more repressive, puritanical, and odoriferously "value-oriented," these kids (and most of them *are* kids) take the stage night after night to keep the shaman's cleansing flame alight. Okay, they don't think of it that way: what *they* want is a gig on Arsenio or Letterman or a speaking part in the next *Police Academy*; and mainly they want not to die on stage.

But they're in the tradition. "Only by laughter," said Rabelais, "will the world be saved."

FRANK McCONNELL

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The true friend of equality

THE END OF EQUALITY
Mickey Kaus
Basic Books, $25, 293 pp.

Wilson Carey McWilliams

Mickey Kaus, an editor of *The New Republic* with a basket of other credits in political journalism, is one of our better gadflies, nipping American liberals into intellectual uneasiness, if not serious thought. His *The End of Equality*, a mistitled book, has already created some stirring and shuffling and may jog liberalism in the direction of a better understanding of equality. And that makes it a gift, by any reckoning, to democratic life.

For some time now, as Kaus observes, liberalism has been inclined to point to disparities of income as crucial evidence of inequality. According to Kaus, this "money liberalism," preoccupied with redistributing income, is tilting at windmills, especially under contemporary conditions: the well-to-do evade or adapt to taxes; job training only creates new orders of rank; protectionism exacts too high a price in economic well-being for society as a whole. In any case, economic equality is at odds with capitalism which, Kaus maintains, is essential to adequate economic growth. To that extent, *The End of Equality* lives up to its title, but that is only the beginning of a more interesting story.

After all, liberalism's ventures into redistribution have been modest, to say the least. American liberals have held only that incomes should be *more* equal, contending that beyond a certain point, unequal income is incompatible with equality, and Kaus does not disagree. He points out, however, that while this argument implicitly concedes that money is not the sole standard of equality, lacking any other rule, liberalism tends to fall back on income as the measure. Far from proclaiming the end of equality, Kaus is concerned to offer a philosophy better able to defend equality against its all-too-potent enemies.

For Kaus, equality is a conviction of equal worth, a matter of psychology affected by all of civic life, a sense of belonging to a society of equals that he regards as very much imperiled. He denies, however, that increasing inequality of income is the cause of our growing social inequality. Economic differences, he argues, were just as great in the 1950s and early 1960s, years that "weren't bad...for social equality." This claim is jarring, since it slides over the inequalities of race and gender that characterized those years, but Kaus's broader argument is still valid: in recent decades, common institutions and public spaces have been decaying, and classes live in greater isolation. Our lives are less democratic, and that fact makes wealth a more important ordering principle in civic life. Accepting unequal wealth, Kaus calls for heroic measures to rebuild the foundations of a culture of equality.

His program is necessarily ambitious. Kaus indicates the urgent need to reduce the power of money in politics; he supports compulsory National Service, including a return to conscription; he advocates a system of national health care (partly on the unlikely hope that people will mingle across class and ethnic lines in doctors' waiting rooms); he supports communal day care, noting that it is easier to integrate children than adolescents or adults. He has kind words for institutions—like libraries, museums, or the Metro in Washington, D.C.—that provide "in-kind, universal" service to citizens, the "stuff of social equality," but he wants to make such services more efficient, chiefly by limiting public service unions. He celebrates democratic space, and he descries the developments, from suburbanization to narrowcasting, that have helped to shrink the public dimension of life.

At bottom, though, work is the cornerstone of Kaus's civic vision. Any hope for vitalizing civic equality presumes a solution to the problem of the underclass, a major contributor to the fear of public spaces, and especially, of cities and public schools. Recognizing all the intractabilities, Kaus would begin by substituting work for welfare, offering WPA-like jobs at government-supplemented wages, ter-

"Equal rights for queens is all well and good. But we kings have our divine *rights!"*

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minating all other forms of welfare beyond austere, in-kind maintenance. Better than condescending "compassion," Kaus argues, his design respects the dignity of citizens and their right to contribute to the common life.

Almost all of these proposals merit support, without respect to Kaus's more utopian conceits, although these are surely troubling. He allows himself the "frankly speculative" hope that—once the underclass is attended to—Americans might choose to live closer to people of different classes, races, and ethnicities (at least, if upper-income Americans are offered lower taxes in exchange for abandoning restrictive zoning). This sounds like cloud-cuckoo land, since it discounts the noneconomic appeals of class distinction and cultural rank. Still, Kaus thinks it at least possible that Americans can be led to value equality for its own sake, if the creed of equality can acquire "the sort of primacy to which religions have aspired." Kaus, in other words, envisions a kind of civil religion rather like Comte's "religion of solidarity." That prospect is scary as well as implausible, since civil religions so characteristically acknowledge no obligation *beyond* the city.

Nor can civil religion really answer the question, "Why should we regard people as equal?" Inequality, as Kaus knows, is pervasive: in addition to their differences in beauty, intellect, and craft, human beings are not equal in moral virtue, for the most determined egalitarian will probably concede that Mother Teresa outranks Ted Bundy in that respect. Kaus notes that equality is a "spiritual" idea, at least in part, but he never explores that dimension and—as one still can in American political practice—he appears to take it for granted. But by neglecting equality's religious underpinning, Kaus loses the breadth and the depth to be found in America's less secular faiths.

Kaus observes, for example, that there is a minimum of wealth necessary to meet human needs, but he never considers the possibility that there is an equally natural maximum, a point beyond which wealth might be a hindrance to the good life. "Needs," in Kaus's view, appear to refer to the body, and his usage points to the classical liberal notion of human beings as bodies who can never have too much, short of victory in their war with nature. That doctrine is the sand at the foundations of Kaus's city—the yearning for mastery is no friend to equality—and those who share his hope will be well-advised to seek help from the City that endures. □

SMARTER THAN WE THOUGHT

THE RATIONAL PUBLIC
Fifty Years of Trends in Americans' Policy Preferences
Benjamin I. Page and Robert Y. Shapiro
University of Chicago Press, $35, 489 pp.

William G. Mayer

As long as there have been democracies, there have been questions about the capacity of the average citizen to shoulder the substantial burdens of self-government. Plato and Aristotle were among the first in a long line of skeptics to voice doubts about the wisdom of any system that entrusted such important powers to the masses.

If the debate about the intelligence of public opinion is an old one, however, it took on a new complexion in the late 1930s, when the development of sample surveys allowed social scientists to measure the thoughts and attributes of the typical citizen with considerably more precision. The initial returns from this endeavor were not especially kind to the mass public. The first major academic voting studies in particular, *The People's Choice* (1944) and *The American Voter* (1960), painted a decidedly pessimistic portrait of the electorate. Most voters, it appeared, were not all that interested in politics; they tended to be poorly informed, lacking even many of the most basic facts that seemed necessary to participate in politics or assess current policy controversies. Their opinions were not very stable or integrated into any kind of comprehensive ideology; their voting decisions were dominated by emotional attachments to political parties, rather than by the kind of careful, informed reasoning that was necessary for issue voting. And though many particulars in this indictment have been challenged and qualified, on the whole, its generally skeptical tone has become part of the received wisdom of political science.

It is this tradition that is boldly taken on by Benjamin I. Page and Robert Y. Shapiro. As its title suggests, Page and Shapiro's book attempts to provide answers to two distinct sets of questions. On the one hand, they have presented a remarkably wide-ranging and insightful defense of the intelligence and capacity of the mass public. Whatever the limitations of individual voters, they insist, American public opinion as a whole is rational and coherent; collective policy preferences are generally stable and change in understandable and predictable ways; the mass public draws reasonable distinctions and evaluates policies on the basis of its own real interests and a genuine conception of the public good.

But Page and Shapiro's book is considerably more than this. As the second half of their title indicates, their book is also the first comprehensive study of *changes* in mass attitudes. Somewhat surprisingly, this topic has remained, until quite recently, a largely unexplored area of public opinion research. But there are now a fairly large number of instances where the same survey question has been asked on a regular basis over a period of thirty or even fifty years. *The Rational Public* is the first major attempt to bring all these data together, and see what they tell us about the changing shape of American public opinion.

At this point, I must plead to being something of an interested party, since I am the author of another book on the same sub-

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ject published this year. And it is precisely my own work that gives me some perspective for appreciating the enormous amount of research and analysis that went into the *The Rational Public*, and the significant contribution it makes to our understanding of public opinion. Page and Shapiro draw on results from dozens of different polling organizations, much of which was previously unpublished or located in widely scattered archives and reference sources. The result, in chapters 3-6, is a tour through the major changes in American public opinion on virtually every issue in social, economic, and foreign policy.

On social issues, for example, Page and Shapiro document a remarkable revolution in American attitudes about racial and gender equality. Since the late 1930s and early 1940s, there has been a huge increase in the public's opposition to racial discrimination and in its willingness to accord an equal role to women in such areas as politics and business. Americans have also become substantially more supportive of freedom of speech and other civil liberties. Yet, the news wasn't all good for liberals: since the mid-1960s, there has been a decisive conservative shift in attitudes about crime and punishment, especially the death penalty.

On economic issues, they find much less dramatic change. Popular support for most forms of governmental spending and regulation has been high and generally stable. There were some signs of a conservative trend in the late 1970s; but, they conclude, "in nearly every case this 'right turn' of opinion was small and temporary." Their discussion of foreign policy shows, not surprisingly, the sharp reaction against military intervention and the cold war in the late 1960s, followed by a resurgence of anticommunism in the late 1970s, and then the final disintegration of the cold war mentality in the late 1980s. Yet, throughout this period, Page and Shapiro find that isolationism had strikingly little appeal: whatever specific policies they might endorse or oppose, most Americans have come to accept the proposition that the United States must play an active role in world affairs.

I do have a number of questions about *The Rational Public*—in particular, about whether its two "halves" really fit together. Though I agree with most of the particular conclusions about the changes and trends in public opinion, I don't think a lot of it proves, one way or another, whether public opinion is rational.

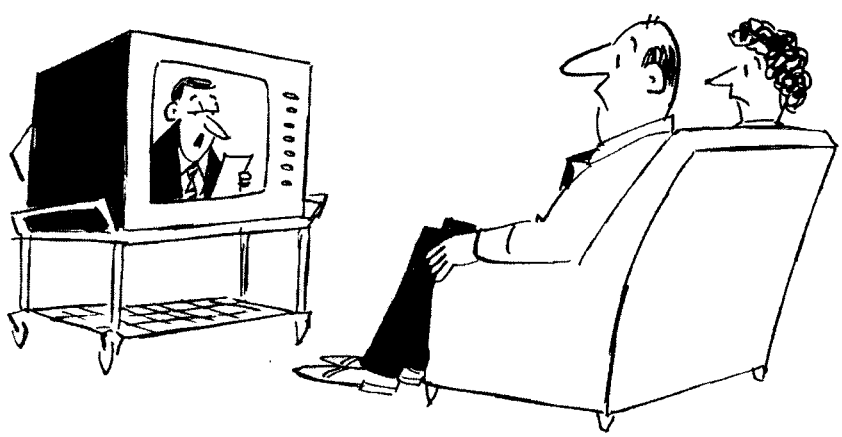
Consider just one example: One of the authors' arguments is that collective public opinion is rational not simply because individuals are able to respond to the changes they directly experience in the world around them, but because "a complex social system" allows for the possibility of "collective deliberation....Thus ordinary citizens need not master the intricacies of policy analysis, but can learn enough to form intelligent preferences simply by knowing whom to trust for a reliable conclusion."

And who are these trusted intermediaries who are charged with such an important responsibility? Overwhelmingly the most important, according to their analysis, are television news commentators and so-called experts. And since, as they acknowledge, experts are often selected and sanctioned by the media, this argument to a large extent boils down to the claim that public opinion is intelligent because it relies on cues from the media for sorting through complicated policy controversies.

Does this argument hold up? Well, it depends on what you think of the media. Page and Shapiro devote a lot of attention to how the media have covered various issues (though this part of their analysis comes entirely from secondary sources); and their general conclusion is that distortions, misinformation, and manipulation in America tend to have a decidedly right-wing slant, highly supportive of capitalism, minimal government, and the status quo. As it turns out, I strongly disagree with this verdict. Particularly on social and cultural questions (such as abortion), I think the evidence is overwhelming that the media have a strong liberal (though not radical) bias.

My purpose in raising this issue is not to rehash an old controversy, but to make the point that Page and Shapiro's perspective on media bias plays a crucial role in their overall argument. Almost all of their examples of cases in which the public was misled or misinformed are instances where government withheld or distorted the information available to the mass public. About the only real fault they ascribe to the press is its tendency to believe government propaganda too readily. If they were more willing to see the media as an institution with its own set of biases and distortions, they might wonder more about the wisdom of a system that accords such extraordinary power to an unrepresentative and largely unaccountable institution.

In short, those scholars who are more skeptical about the intelligence of public opinion will have ample ground for a counterattack. Yet, anyone who feels so inclined will be undertaking a major task, for part of the achievement of this book is the remarkable diversity of evidence and argument that Page and Shapiro bring together in support of their central thesis. It is likely to have a central place in academic work on the subject for years to come. □



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POLITICS, PUBLIC OPINION & THE TUBE

IS ANYONE RESPONSIBLE?
How Television Frames
Political Issues
Shanto Iyengar
University of Chicago Press, $19.95, 243 pp.

Timothy S. Prinz

A host of recent events has reinforced a sense among many Americans that television's pervasive presence is exerting a not-so-subtle influence over our society and our politics. The Rodney King verdict and its aftermath, Ross Perot's presidential campaign, and the seemingly endless commentary joined to the coverage of the Democratic and Republican national conventions emphasize television's importance.

Shanto Iyengar's study examines how television news covers politics and its influence on public opinion, and finds that the way television frames political issues significantly affects the way people evaluate those issues and political leaders. It seems that many citizens are looking for someone to blame for the state of our politics, and Iyengar's study hints that television news' coverage of politics and events may play a large role in the current void in responsibility.

Iyengar's point of departure is the well-known dismal state of public affairs knowledge in this country. Study after study has found that most citizens have little knowledge of and pay little attention to matters of public policy. As Walter Lippmann noted almost half a century ago, most people spend their time earning a living, and once home from work are more likely to peruse the comics than to inform themselves of the pros and cons of weighty issues.

Yet, when asked, most citizens can provide an opinion on the issues of the day. They will take a stand on abortion, social welfare, defense spending, and the like, and will offer their opinion to the growing array of surveys and polls across the country. Iyengar explains this by focusing on the psychological processes that underlie opinions. He identifies attributions of responsibility as a significant heuristic (or rule of thumb) that people use to simplify the world around them. Thus, when asked to think about crime or unemployment, people will often consider who is responsible for causing or solving the problem, and evaluate the issue accordingly. Citizens' opinions flow directly from their vision of who is responsible for causing or resolving political problems.

Television news enters the picture because of the way it shapes people's attributions or responsibility through the framing of its coverage. Social psychologists have known for some time that people are highly sensitive to context when they are asked to make decisions or offer an opinion. The way the choice is framed can be an important contextual cue. Thus, studies have found that surgery is viewed as a more attractive option for treating cancer by doctors and patients when survival rates are used to describe its success rather than mortality rates. Similarly, oil companies "frame" our choices at the gas pump by offering a cash discount rather than a credit surcharge.

Iyengar observes that television news about politics is dominated by two types of stories: episodic and thematic. Episodic stories take the form of a case study or event-based report and depict political issues by focusing on concrete instances. Thematic stories place public issues in a more general or abstract context, and often take the form of the well-known background piece. Not surprisingly, episodic and thematic stories tend to dominate television news; these reports make for "good pictures," the *sine qua non* of television news.

The crucial point is that these two frames produce dramatically different attributions of responsibility. Episodic stories tend to cause viewers to focus on the individuals involved in the stories, rather than on social and economic forces. This powerfully affects how individuals assess responsibility for causing or treating political problems.

These framing effects extend to individuals' evaluations of political issues. To cite a few examples, Iyengar finds that the emphasis on episodic coverage of crime and terrorism raised viewer support for the death penalty and military intervention. Similarly, episodic coverage of poverty reduced support for government programs and increased public approval of leaders committed to reducing such programs. Given recent shifts in public preferences toward more law and order and less government, Iyengar suggests that these changes have occurred not only because of the repeated election of political leaders espousing these views, but also because of prevailing patterns of television news coverage that drive public opinion.

Finally, Iyengar finds that the way television news frames its political stories can have important consequences for the way citizens evaluate political leaders. Simply put, the more individuals hold society or government responsible for causing or treating a problem, the more likely they are to focus on that problem in their evaluations of politicians. Unfortunately, television news often dampens the sense of societal or governmental responsibility, distracting the viewer's attention from fundamental causes through its focus on the anecdotal or idiosyncratic.

In essence, television news engages viewers in a political kind of Rorschach test, prompting them to see one version of the image as opposed to another. By reducing political issues to the level of the anecdotal, television news leads viewers to focus on issue-specific explanations, which in turn, shields society and government from responsibility. Americans thus come to view chronic problems like poverty and crime not in terms of deep-seated social and economic forces, but as mere idiosyncratic outcomes.

Iyengar's conclusions concerning the role television plays in reducing democratic

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accountability at its most basic level cannot easily be ignored. At the very least, the fact that television news reduces the inclination to hold political leaders responsible for social and economic problems may go a long way towards explaining the current dissatisfaction with politics in Washington. □

ONLY 581 SUPERMARKETS

AFTER HENRY
Joan Didion
Simon & Schuster, $21.50, 336 pp.

Lee Siegel

The title piece of Joan Didion's new collection of twelve essays covering politics and culture in Washington, California, and New York refers to Henry Robbins, one of Didion's early editors, who "had fallen dead, age fifty-one, to the floor of the 14th Street subway station...." It sounds the leitmotif that ties together most of these essays, all written within the last several years. Didion is persuaded that we live by the "narratives" we tell ourselves or that get told by others, the most potentially distorting being those "public narrative[s] based at no point on observable reality." Henry Robbins, according to Didion, was the kind of editor who "gave the writer the idea of himself, the idea of herself, the image of self that enabled the writer to sit down alone and do it." After Henry, the author could no longer reassure herself with his narrative about her gifts. Yet she kept writing despite her loss. If she can live without her narrative, she seems to be saying (with a strangely detached indifference to the part of Henry Robbins's life that had nothing to do with her), we can live without ours, private or public.

As an agile choreographer of deadpan ironic contrasts—a Hollywood screenwriter as well as a journalist and fiction writer, she edits her prose for dramatic effect like a scenarist—Didion has a sharp eye for the fabricated public moment. In 1988, she writes, the "polls indicated that the electorate wanted 'change,' and this wish for change had been translated, by both [the Bush and Dukakis] campaigns, into the wish for a 'change back,' a regression...." True, that's what the polls said, and both candidates predictably responded with varying degrees of cant. But the country's yearning for some brake on cultural flux wasn't a product of the polls. Rather, it stemmed from a real social and political development. Though Didion does a lot of expert seeing-through in these meticulously created essays, she has a habit of not seeing through to anything. She methodically takes the cynical response to phenomena for the phenomena themselves. And since she regards both the Democratic and Republican responses as equally artificial narratives, she comes to believe that each one is as good as the other—that they make up, in fact, one seamless deceit. The "notion," she declares, "that the citizen's choice among determinedly centrist candidates makes a 'difference,' is in fact the narrative's most central element, and also its most fictive."

The fictiveness will surprise people on opposite sides of the debate over health care, abortion, the environment, entitlement programs, urban assistance, defense spending, gun control, tax credits for private schools, etc. But they are probably looking under a party's rhetoric for its social and political values. Didion likes to look under a party's social and political values for its rhetoric. For her, the worst abuse of power is the way politicians make up stories to try to trick people into voting for them. For the weakest among us, or the most outraged, the form of power that matters most is the fact that some people vote for one candidate and not for another.

Didion is the Walter Pater of American journalism. Her aesthetic critique of aestheticized events tellingly muddles *After Henry*'s lengthy centerpiece, "Sentimental Journeys." Originally published in the *New York Review of Books*, the highly touted essay is Didion's meditation on New York's jogger rape case, which involved the sexual assault and vicious beating in Central Park of a young woman three years ago. The trial of six black and Hispanic teen-agers accused of attacking a white investment banker who had been—arrogantly, some people said—taking her usual late-night run through the park roiled the city with racial, sexual, and class politics.

Didion crafts a lot of understated sarcasm toward the local media's "sentimental" concoction of an "encouraging promise of narrative resolution." At the same time, the "narratives" of the city's black and white communities, men and women, rich and poor, provoke something like amazement in this transplanted Hollywood writer, both for the sensationalist way they were reported and for the striking differences between them. What Didion doesn't grasp is that the New York media's mindless opportunism does the most surprisingly democratic things to the city's discourse of information. It creates what you might call an accidental conversation, in which opposing interests find themselves tossing about cheek to jowl on indiscriminate waves of images, print, and spoken words. Didion misses the general tendency of a very unsentimental New York not to divide itself neatly into "narratives" but, instead, to entangle itself chaotically in a very real web of mutual conflicts. She doesn't much care, however, about the common context that energizes antagonistic interests. To apprehend that takes a thinking-through, not just a seeing-through. She is too busy guiding us through the way antagonistic interests and the sensationalist reporting of them *look*.

Consequently, Didion inaccurately interprets some of the city's least deceptive layers of appearance. The tabloids did indeed stress the jogger's "superior class," as Didion says, by referring to the "light gold chain around her slender neck" (*Newsday*) and her accent "suited to board-

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rooms" (the *Daily News*). But the tabloids were not, as she goes on to claim quoting from the *News*, divisively teaching "the city a lesson 'about courage and class.'" If that's what they had been doing, it might not have been so divisive after all—some narratives are a lot less pernicious than others and have unexpectedly universal effects. With their typical flair for the exploitable, the tabloids were offering an unlovely catharsis to the secret resentments of their readers, most of whom have little sympathy for the accent of the boardroom. To add another wrinkle of complication, those readers were black and Hispanic, as well as white. No matter what their color, many of them shared the same resentments; but they also shared the same openness to a "narrative resolution," and even to a lesson in "courage and class."

Maybe because she has the West Coaster's antipathy to wrinkles of whatever variety, Didion eventually drops the jogger case altogether and applies herself to pondering the nature of New York. Seeing stories everywhere perhaps inspires the urge to come up with your own, and Didion feels certain that in 1989 this city of 8 million people was "rapidly vanishing into the chasm between its actual life and its preferred narratives." Her sense of the occult mounts as she shifts her attention from the politics of race, crime, rape to the "system" itself, to the "chain of direct or indirect patronage extending deep into the fabric of the city." Ever the Californian, she makes an esoteric connection between New York's tragic violence and the fact that "there were in the five boroughs in 1990 only 581 supermarkets" and that—an even graver injustice in a city where everything is going down the tubes—"the in-sink garbage disposal unit is for example illegal in New York." She advises an immediate tax cut and a stronger hand with the unions.

Encumbered by the simplifying critical tools of narratives and subtexts, Didion is so convinced that the realities of big-city patronage and corruption make New York an abyss of malignant power structures that she sounds just as much like Dan Quayle as like her good friend Jerry Brown—who on occasion also sounds a lot like her. But the mismatch between New York's Byzantine tumult and Didion's like-wow cynicism might introduce a valuable truth. It could be that in her rumination on her new home, Didion is simply enacting her own point about the blurred lines between political positions. If so, we are confronted with the beginnings of a new narrative: the difference between a Hollywood liberal and a California conservative is only about three thousand miles. □

DOWN & OUT IN LIFE

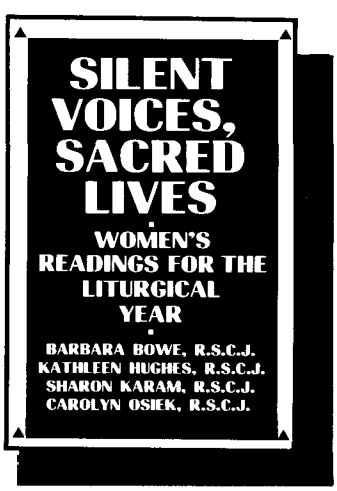
TIME AND TIDE
Edna O'Brien
Farrar, Straus & Giroux, $21, 326 pp.

Robert E. Hosmer, Jr.

Like Milton's elegy "Lycidas," Edna O'Brien's latest novel, *Time and Tide*, is a haunting water poem, a heartfelt elegy engendered by the two most powerful human emotions: love and loss. Only here the waters swirl not just in a mighty river but also within the human amnion, for this is a book about what is likely the most dangerous of human activities: mothering. O'Brien's achievement in *Time and Tide* is so extraordinary that this eleventh novel may well eclipse the previous ten, even her first, *The Country Girls* (1960).

Time and Tide is the story of Nell Steadman, a middle-aged woman from the west of Ireland, long resident in London. Nell first appears musing as she tries frantically to prevent her second son's departure from home: "What could she do now to retrieve things. She thought of rushing down the stairs to his bedroom with as normal a manner as artifice can manage and asking, 'Would you like a cup of tea?'" His departure, which she cannot forestall, is the last in a series of painful, unresolved separations. In the course of the narrative, which moves with effortless interiority from past to present, we learn Nell's story: an early marriage to Walter, an older, tyrannical, and abusive man whose idea of a Christmas gift is a

"A lectionary for daily prayer whose time has come."



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postcard inscribed "Happy Nothing"; her separation from him and the brutal battle for custody of their two sons, Paddy and Tristan; her chaotic life as a single mother caring for two children with no support from their father; and finally the story of her losing both sons, one to the Thames, the other to a young, pregnant woman.

Nell is a classically divided consciousness, torn between restraint and reckless abandon, between self-immolation and self-indulgence, between death and life. At her very center lies a most acute absence: Nell has never had the kind of vital, osmotic, and nurturing connection with her mother that characterizes the original, amniotic bonding between mother and child. Her dealings with her mother are bruising battles: with extraordinary aptness, Nell converts experience to resonant metaphor when she selects an egg, "shell-less, soft as any placenta, its bruisedness a resemblance of us," as emblematic of their relationship. The two women agree about nothing, and the level of their combat is mortal. When Nell finally summons the courage to tell her mother how she feels, the results are catastrophic for both.

Nell longs for a man to rescue her: she is ever vulnerable, sometimes ludicrously so, as when she falls for a man who inscribes "Let us see the Northern lights together" on a matchbook cover. One man—whether actor, director, greengrocer, shopkeeper, or son—will do it, must do it, she feels. She thinks "in secret of a man who would come and whisk her to altitudes of happiness." Yet, though men continually fail her, she clings to a sacral-romantic vision ("it was as if she had learned nothing and still believed in transubstantiation through another"), until she suffers a complete nervous collapse. That illness marks the beginning of a painful shift in consciousness as Nell begins to learn the lesson Anita Brookner has discerned in O'Brien's fiction, "no compensation for the loss of the mother is possible...all the men in the world could not replace the original closeness." Nell Steadman's pain is exacerbated by the absence of that original closeness: she seeks what she has never had, and the results, at least in the short term, are disastrous. Marriage fails. Lovers fail. Children fail. God fails. What's left?

Time and Tide is a fiction of female development. Nell Steadman comes to perceive more about her mother as she plumbs the depths of her own experience; her own lately held conclusion about the nature of motherhood shocks both Nell and the reader: "What pretty names we give to the carnivorousness that is called mother." Near the end of the novel, as Nell begins to pull things together, she articulates the great questions she now knows have preoccupied her: "What does one do with grief? What does one do with hate?" At the very end, Nell experiences a Joycean moment: "Everything radiant for a moment, as if she reached, or was reached, beyond the boundaries of herself." The pain and the pleasure of the text reside in our intimate access not only to Nell Steadman's suffering but to her final affirmation:

"'I can bear it,' she said, and looked around at the air so harmless, so flaccid, and so still, a stillness such as she had not known since it had happened, or maybe ever. In the stillness there was silence, but there was no word for that yet because it was so new; pale sanctuary devoid at last of all consolations.

"'You can bear it,' the silence said, because that is all there is, this now that then, this present that past, this life this death, and the involuntary shudder that keeps reminding us we are alive."

This novel could only have been written by a woman, and one feels that O'Brien has more than a speaking acquaintance with the surging forces that shape this story. After assuming custody of her children, Nell works for a publisher, often taking manuscripts home with her; one evening, as she plows through a pile she happens on one of particular interest. To the writer, Nell offers advice that O'Brien herself seems to have taken to heart: "You have to be near to it to tell it, and then you have to go very far away from it to give it that enchantment that distance bestows, the infallibility of the gods...no one else can do it but you...Think only of big things, Millie, big, sad, lonely, glorious, archetypal things."

James Joyce described his play "Exiles" as "an extravagant excursion into forbidden territory"; Edna O'Brien's latest novel is that and more. Read *Time and Tide* and know what it is to surrender to a courageous and honest writer of fiction. □

REVIEWERS

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Family resemblances

Lawrence S. Cunningham

After an introductory discussion of the role of the Old Testament in church life, its moral perspective, and some rules of interpretation, Birch follows the biblical story in rough chronological order (beginning with Genesis and ending with the Wisdom literature) to tease out the major ethical considerations reflected in the text of the Hebrew Bible. I must confess not to have read the book right through. I used it for my own personal background reading while teaching an undergraduate course on biblical foundations of theology and, as a consequence, read in a rather unsystematic fashion (e.g., "Let's see what Birch says about the psalms") and over a four-month period.

Let Justice Roll Down: The Old Testament, Ethics, and Christian Life, *by Bruce C. Birch, Westminster/John Knox, $19.95, 383 pp.*

In general my impression is of an author who has a deep pastoral orientation in his biblical scholarship, a gift for clear exposition, and a fine grasp of the main contours of scholarly research. The book is very "user-friendly" for those, like myself, who are not professional scholars of the Hebrew Bible: the extensive bibliography is limited to English titles; there is an index of scriptural passages (always a plus!); and where there are scholarly disputes, Birch tells us what they are and how he assesses them. Above all, he keeps his topic in focus: how the Old Testament enriches the way we live.

Birch's work is not aimed at scholars, but at anyone who wishes to help make his or her learning come alive for others. I think pastors, teachers, and serious readers of the Bible will profit from a reading of it. It would make a good book for background reading in college ethics courses but could also be used for adult education.

Gutierrez's most recent work, like his fine *We Drink from Our Own Wells* (1984), locates itself at the intersection of theology and spirituality or, more precisely, in the area of what was once called "biblical theology." This present work is a meditation, to borrow Pascal's classic phrase, not on the god of the philosophers but the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and, as Gutierrez notes in his introduction, that same God is the God of Jesus. I say that this work is one of biblical theology because it is on the biblical text that Gutierrez keeps his eye as he plumbs the mystery of the God of revelation.

I read *The God of Life* each morning before the school day began and found myself going back to my Bible to annotate texts I had previously overlooked or undervalued in earlier readings. Gutierrez has read the pertinent scholarship, is very sensitive to the original languages and how words get translated, and what the tradition makes of those words. Above all, he encounters the text with an openness to the reality of a specific time and place living among the Peruvian poor as he does. He reads and thinks with great faith and no sentimentality.

The God of Life, *by Gustavo Gutierrez, Orbis, $14.95, 214 pp.*

The best way to understand the method of Gutierrez (if there be a method) is to take seriously his conviction that finding the God of life demands the "silence of contemplation and commitment." What Gutierrez requires, in short, is that we first listen and then act. He is a sure guide for the doing of both. Over the years his writings have taken on more and more of a spiritual and contemplative character. My suspicion is that time will judge Gustavo Gutierrez not only as one of the parents of liberation theology (his claim to that honor is rock solid) but as one of the premier spiritual writers of this generation who also happens to be a first-rate theologian.

Marty and Appleby co-direct a complex research project which, over the next few years, hopes to complete a worldwide survey and analysis of religious fundamentalism(s). The project, sponsored by the American Academy of Arts and Letters, envisions a multivolumed report ending with some policy recommendations derived from the study itself. The present hefty book reports the first fruit of this research. A number of scholars have devoted lengthy essays simply to *describing* the phenomenon of religious fundamentalism in the various religious traditions of the world. What we have in this volume is, as it were, a phenomenol-

LAWRENCE S. CUNNINGHAM *chairs the department of theology at the University of Notre Dame; his* Thomas Merton: Spiritual Master *was recently published by Paulist.*

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ogy of contemporary fundamentalism(s). Subsequent volumes will consider the impact of fundamentalism on social structures, political movements, etc.

Only the most dedicated soul will read these essays cover to cover. I contented myself with an *ad libitum* look at things that most interested me. Catholic fundamentalism was first on my list since that is familiar territory. The essay on fundamentalist movements in Latin America was exceedingly interesting and very well done. There were fine scholarly discussions about many of the troubled hotspots of the world in the appropriate essays: Sikhs versus Hindus or Hindus versus Muslims; resurgent nationalistic sects in Japan; the Jewish *Heredim* and their shaping of Israeli culture; the Shia' resurgence in the Islamic world as well as other Muslim movements like that of the Islamic Brotherhood in Egypt.

It is not clear to me if this volume was to be the definitive tour of the fundamentalist world; if so, a few places were passed by. There is nothing in the book on syncretist sects in Black Africa (in fact, Africa is *terra incognita* except for Muslim North Africa); very little on Catholic fundamentalism in Europe outside the circles of the Lefebvre movement; omissions in the American scene ranging from the relatively benign Mormon polygamists of the West and the decidedly nonbenign purveyors of a hybrid Protestant fundamentalism, *cum* racist ideology. Finally, I take it from the omissions that syncretist cults in general (e.g., Santeria or Macumba or Voodoo or Rastafarianism) do not fall under the purview of what the editors consider fundamentalism, but why this should be is not plainly spelled out.

Fundamentalisms Observed, *edited by Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, University of Chicago Press, $40, 872 pp.*

A list of these omissions may seem like a cavil when handed over eight hundred pages of text and, to a certain degree, it is. The purpose of the project is to get a fix on the deep structures of fundamentalisms and that may not require a comprehensive sampling of the phenomenon. Most fundamentalisms (note the plural; a strict definition of the phenomenon does not work. We are dealing with what Wittgenstein calls family resemblances) occur, it appears, as strategies of resistance (e.g., to modernization) or self-identification (e.g., in the face of cultural or economic elites) or bulwarks against cultural upheaval. In all of these cases (or in a combination of them) there is an Enemy and, as the editors point out, it is common to all forms of fundamentalism that the Enemy is named, mythicized/demonized, and, subsequently, that Enemy becomes the force which provides the energy for struggle.

In an earlier column commenting on a biography of the Benedictine liturgist, Geoffrey Diekmann, I applauded efforts to acquire the stories of the major participants at Vatican II before they pass into history. Gustave Weigel, S.J., the pioneer American ecumenist, died before the council ended. He is pretty much a forgotten figure today since his importance has been so overshadowed by his illustrious fellow Jesuit, John Courtney Murray. His significance rests, as this biography shows, not on what he wrote (which is only of historical interest today) but on who he was and how he related to others in the fledgling days of ecumenical dialogue in this country.

Patrick Collins's biography of Weigel (rewritten from a dissertation done two decades ago) is an act of *pietas* toward a priest-theologian who literally worked himself to death in the service of the church. It is also an explanation of why Weigel's work has had no staying power. Weigel took up an interest in Protestant theology at the suggestion of Murray who needed someone to cover the area for *Theological Studies*. When the council was called Weigel was basically teaching on automatic pilot and still indebted to a manualist approach to ecclesiology that was innovative only by comparison with his more intellectually doltish contemporaries. Weigel's great gift, as Collins shows, was for friendship and his great asset was a deep and abiding religious faith. That counted for much in terms of his ecumenical contacts. His non-Roman Catholic contemporaries often noted that his personal ecumenism frequently outstripped his very conservative theology.

Gustave Weigel: A Pioneer of Reform, *by Patrick W. Collins, Liturgical Press/Glazier, $19.95, 287 pp.*

Readers who remember the events leading up to Vatican II will have a pleasant stroll down memory lane as they read this biography. Others may even get a small shock at the smug narrowness of our old Catholic world. I well remember being told by an American who would become one of the first *periti* on ecumenism how dangerous a thinker Gustave Weigel was. I was then only beginning to read theology and received this warning carefully but afterwards read Weigel with a certain sense of adventuresomeness. While reading this book I could not but mentally mut-

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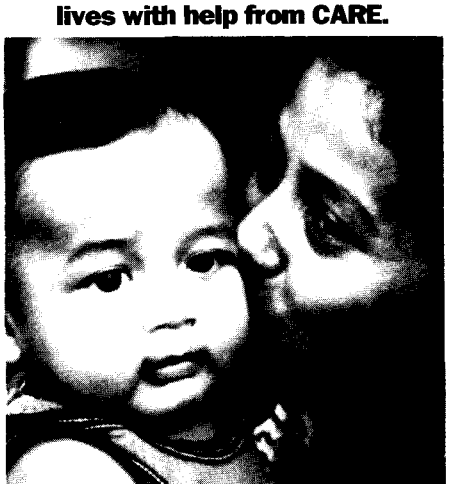

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ter to myself that we've come a long way; a long, long, way.

Steven Ozment is a fine historian of Reformation Europe whose textbook, *The Age of Reform* (1981), has been a boon to all classroom teachers. His current book, developed from some articles he had already published here and there, is, in essence, a picture of the German Reformation drawn from Ozment's wide knowledge of sixteenth-century social history.

Protestants: The Birth of a Revolution, *by Steven Ozment, Doubleday, $20, 270 pp.*

It is an immensely satisfying piece of work in places but eccentrically thin in others (we get one-and-a-half pages as an appendix on the historiographical significance of the Reformation).

Ozment has fine descriptive chapters on family life; on what it really meant for a sixteenth-century German city to embrace the reform; on the crucial role of pamphlets in the religion of the time (e.g., in the 1460s the biggest share of printing went into the production of indulgences; in the 1520s into pamphlets advancing the reform!). Furthermore, he is good at challenging the conventional wisdom. To the feminist historians who lament the reduction of women's roles to the household with the evaporation of the cloister (women's space), Ozment notes, using Luther's wife as an example, the rise of mercantile and entrepreneurial possibilities opening to women. To those who saw the reform as sweeping away the rot of late medieval superstition, he assesses the opinions of revisionist historians like Bossy and Oakley who have a far more benign interpretation of late medieval religious practices.

In sum: a very readable and highly informative example of social history. Those who think they know early Protestantism from reading Luther and Calvin would do well to read a historian like Ozment to find out what it meant to become a Protestant in sixteenth-century Germany.

One cannot understand the Catholic tradition (broadly conceived) without taking into account the long history of the monastic life. While there are many excellent specialized studies of monasticism, every now and again one comes along that is both highly specialized and eminently accessible to the nonscholar. I would place Hirschfield's interesting volume (beautifully turned out by Yale University Press) on the monasteries of the Judean desert in that category.

Hirschfield, an Israeli field archaeologist, has surveyed the entire Judean desert area of Israel to produce a catalogue of every Byzantine monastery built in the area from, roughly, the Constantinian period until the coming of Islam. It may come as a surprise for people to know that there were a large number of such monasteries (that of Saint Saba exists down to this day, as does the more famous Saint Catherine's further south in the Sinai).

In extremely well-written chapters Hirschfield not only describes these ancient sites but tells us, by a careful use of both literary texts and archaeological remains, about the different kinds of monasteries, the organization of their social life, how their days were spent, their vast knowledge of how to survive in a rather unforgiving setting, and the monastic routes that connected the various holy places.

The Judean Desert Monasteries in the Byzantine Period, *by Yizhar Hirschfield, translated by Jeffrey M. Green, Yale University Press, $45, 305 pp.*

Hirschfield's book is enhanced with clear photographs, architectural sketches, graphs, and maps. There is a kind of appendix which gives brief biographies of the saints and ascetics whom tradition locates at the various monasteries. There is also an excellent bibliography of primary and secondary sources. In the last analysis what this book does is to provide a reliable archaeological companion to Derwas Chitty's classical *The Desert a City* (1966). I would recommend the book as a perfect gift to anyone who loves church history in general and monastic history in particular. □

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 2)

Does Garvey want four more years of: making the poor poorer and the rich richer; gutting affirmative action and civil rights; another Supreme Court Justice like Clarence Thomas; "glory" wars like Panama, Grenada, and the Persian Gulf; more Americans dying for lack of health insurance, more vetos of family leave bills, more unemployment? Garvey's recommendation that we "make a statement" by not voting for anyone for president may ensure that result.

No one would state that Bill Clinton is a perfect candidate. He could be a purist like George McGovern or Michael Dukakis and enjoy the rest of his life as an unsuccessful candidate. But politics is still, unfortunately perhaps, the art of compromise, and only a centrist position can make a Democrat electable. Clinton has many admirable qualities. His daughter attends public schools where two-thirds of the students are black. He worked hard on improving Arkansas education, and succeeded. And, though he has not handled the draft questions well, his original thoughtful letter on the Vietnam war staked out a clear moral position.

As everyone knows, democracy is not a perfect system; it is, in fact, downright messy. And I must point out to Mr. Garvey that perfect presidential candidates are found only in novels. The election is a few weeks away; thoughtful Americans cannot afford the luxury of waiting for perfection. LAURA RYAN CALDWELL, R.N.

Pinstriped violence

Philadelphia, Pa.

To the Editors: Abigail McCarthy's understanding of the difference between violent and nonviolent crimes ["Crimes & Punishments," September 11] is a most upsetting one. Does she really think that Ivan Boesky and Michael Milken and their ilk have not done violence to people, when the leveraged buy-outs, bankruptcies, and bank failures they caused have resulted in the loss of hundreds of thousands of homes, pensions, and whatever semblance of fi-

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nancial security many people have worked for? It seems to me that this kind of systemic violence is far more serious in its implications than "crimes of violence" by one individual against one or a few others—though I am not particularly enthusiastic about either kind, having been robbed several times, once at gunpoint, and being the owner of a New York City co-op purchased in 1989 that is now worth considerably less than its mortgage.

The desire of many Americans to punish rather than rehabilitate criminals—as evidenced by minimum sentencing laws and the relentless rejection of the tax increases needed to provide the food, education, housing, and health care that would reduce crime in this country—is certainly a cause for grave concern. I suspect that Abigail McCarthy and I are in complete agreement about the need to change this. I am also gravely concerned, however, about deep-seated attitudes that make possible the kind of rhetorical violence evidenced in McCarthy's next-to-last paragraph, in which she (unconsciously, no doubt) juxtaposes the nonviolent white-collar criminal, whose incarceration is pointless, with the armed robber from the urban ghetto. Cheap shots about political correctness cannot disguise the racist implications of this kind of language.

MARIAN RONAN

The author replies:

Surely Ms. Ronan, given as she is to calling "cheap shot," must realize that to resort to the charge of racism is just that, and, in this case, very predictable? Unhappily no one in the United States in these troubled times is wholly immune to the charge but perhaps I can be forgiven for feeling that, as the recipient of various citations for work in race relations and for social justice over the years, and as a Caucasian who can proudly claim black cousins and Asian in-laws, I am at least inoculated against it.

That aside, how do we differ? Not, certainly, on the point that white-collar crime has victims or that white-collar criminals should be appropriately punished. My column makes it clear that I think white-collar crime a danger to society but a danger different from that of crimes of physical violence. Ms. Ronan's eagerness to equate that violence (à la Marcuse) with systemic violence, attitudinal violence, (and, oh yes, rhetorical violence) is largely a matter of semantics. However, when she says that she views "systemic violence as far more serious in its implications," we do differ. I do not find her experience of both—systemic violence in the decline in value of her co-op contrasted with armed robbery—adequate underpinning for her argument. There are remedies of sorts for the victim of a bad mortgage; few, if any, for the victim of armed robbery, especially if it is accompanied, as it often is, by physical violence.

And where I live physical violence goes far beyond armed robbery. This past week an old woman (black) was found brutally beaten and thrown among the ashcans on Capitol Hill, and a twenty-two-year-old just beginning her career was found bludgeoned to death a few blocks away. Even worse, a young mother (a woman of color) taking her child to school was "carjacked" by two young men whose own car had run out of gas; she was dragged to her death after they failed to scrape her off against a fence. Her child, strapped in the car seat, was thrown out on the highway. The implications for society as a whole of these crimes of violence "by one individual against another" are dire for us all.

ABIGAIL McCARTHY

Cease and desist

Philadelphia, Pa.

To the Editors: Commonweal slipped into a serious error of logic in its otherwise helpful special supplement on the laity [September 11] when it implied that ARCC, the Association for the Rights of Catholics in the Church (you also dropped off the important last three words of the name), was guilty of an "almost obsessive preoccupation with the church's structures and processes."

As a cofounder of ARCC in 1980—in the wake of the Vatican attacks on Küng, Schillebeeckx, *et al.*, and soon thereafter Hunthausen, Boff, Gutierrez, Curran, *et ad infinitum*—we felt it was important to establish an organization of Catholics which would focus on fostering "a collegial understanding of church in which decision making is shared and accountability is realized among Catholics of every kind...." I and the other ARCC members still believe it is important to focus on such goals.

But, good heavens! ARCC is not my only activity. Like many, if not most, Americans, I am involved in many communities and groups, each with its own set of goals. If these different groups did not have an "almost obsessive preoccupation" with their particular concerns and goals, they would be ineffective and lose their purpose.

But *Commonweal* implies that such sharp focus for the sake of effectiveness is wrong. I suppose then that the Sierra Club is wrong to be single-minded in its concern for the environment, and Amnesty International is wrong to be focused solely on human rights violations around the world, and the Commonweal Associates are wrong to be solely devoted to the survival and flourishing of *Commonweal*. Ridiculous? Right!

So, *Commonweal*, desist from this error, and help ARCC work toward its goals—which you obviously also desire—so that we all can live our Christian life of justice and love in the world the more effectively.

LEONARD SWIDLER

The writer is editor of the Journal of Ecumenical Studies, *director of graduate religion studies, and professor of Catholic thought and interreligious dialogue at Temple University.*

From the editors: Both Leonard Swidler and Mary Louise Hartman [Correspondence, October 9] take issue with a phrase that we quoted from the Chicago Declaration (the one about obsessiveness) but did not endorse; we pointed out that groups like the ARCC "might argue that they have good reason for their preoccupations," and we went on to list some of those reasons in terms similar to those used by Swidler and Hartman.

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Gates of trouble

Auburn, Ala.

To the Editors: Suzanne Keen's review of Margaret Drabble's *The Gates of Ivory* [August 14] was both incisive and informative, but one thing puzzled me. Despite Ms. Keen's citation of a direct quote from the book which refers to the Underworld ("Some cross the bridge into the Bad Time, into the Underworld, and return to tell the tale") and her reference to Ms. Drabble's deployment of "objects in oblique metaphorical relation to one another," she makes no effort, anywhere, to relate the significance of the title to the meaning of the work itself.

In the *Aeneid*, as everyone remembers, presumably Ms. Drabble's source, the Gates of Ivory exist in the Underworld along with the Gates of Horn. The Gates of Horn afford genuine apparitions. But from the Gates of Ivory "The Shades send up to earth false dreams that impose on us" [Bk. VI]. If this allusion is applicable, then the entire meaning of the novel ("if novel it be") is changed and Ms. Keen's review is, to say the least, misleading. THOMAS M. CURRAN

The reviewer replies:

Oh dear! Why do I feel I am not to be included in Mr. Curran's "everyone"? He correctly augments my review with the Virgilian reference; for Drabble the source is Homer's Penelope, as the epigraph to her novel indicates. No one allusion governs the entire meaning of this book, as Drabble's narrator takes pains to establish in the sentences I quoted, one of which catches Mr. Curran's attention. I am frankly puzzled as to how I may have misled *Commonweal* readers. SUZANNE KEEN

Substance, yes; style, no

Notre Dame, Ind.

To the Editors: I welcome Margaret O'Brien Steinfels's courteous and thoughtful comment ["An Editor's Notebook," September 25] on my recent article in *America* [August 22]. Although she has promised a more direct response in a letter to *America*, I would like to make a point here that I should have thought to have been obvious. Of course I believe that (some, not all) conflict in the church is about "important questions of substance that remain generally open or troubling." They are not "all politics." Ms. Steinfels seems to have misinterpreted my modification of Avery Dulles's four-category grid, but I take responsibility for not offering sufficient elaboration. Indeed, I have tried to address these questions of substance in my own books, articles, and weekly columns over the years—as, in fact, Ms. Steinfels and *Commonweal* have frequently done, to their justifiable credit.

I am less inclined to rush to agreement on the matter of "style" raised toward the end of her piece. If "contending groups and individuals in the church" are to be criticized for not exercising "the capacity to be self-critical," for ignoring the "valid fears of adversaries," for wallowing in "the self-exculpatory pathos of imagining oneself [a] martyred underdog," for being "smug," and for "excommunicating critics or stigmatizing ideas," the author of such charges ought to provide specific examples. Who are among the offending individuals, groups, and publications—on all sides of the conflict, including especially the center-left? What have they written or said that would merit the severe characterizations Ms. Steinfels has drawn of them?

If I have, in fact, "misperceived what [she] was saying," it may not be entirely my fault or the fault of others who share the reservations I expressed about her thesis. (REV.) RICHARD P. McBRIEN

The writer is Crowley-O'Brien-Walter professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame.

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